Moving Out of Poverty

Understanding Freedom, Democracy and Growth from the Bottom-Up

National Synthesis Report

Afghanistan

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Authors & Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

A. The Study

This study is the Afghan section of an international study led by the World Bank across 17 countries, with the purpose “to learn retrospectively from those who were once poor but have moved out of poverty and stayed out of poverty in different political, governance and economic environments.” The study particularly explores the relationship between mobility and conflict from the perspectives of poor Afghani’s who have endured protracted and varied conflicts well beyond the 1996-2006 period covered by the study.

The methodology followed for the most part the guidelines given by the World Bank. Data was collected in six communities of four provinces. Given the small size of the sample, the sampling plan for Afghanistan aimed at maximizing the possibility for diversity, rather than trying to be representative. Safety concerns due to continuing conflict also shaped sampling decisions.

Variables such as the proximity with the city or the country borders, the cultivation and trade of opium poppy, the varied impact of the drought or the war, the degree of exposure to international aid and development programs, among others, were used to formulate hypotheses about the predominant factors of socio-economic movement, their interaction, and their applicability to the visited villages and households.

The sample, although small, provided lively illustrations of action of many factors leading to the socio-economic movement of households, and the interaction between them. The six communities thus represent case studies, or ideal types, of a few specific aspects of a varying environment and strategies of Afghan households to move out of poverty.

B. Main Findings

1. Mutations

Security / Peace
Peace was the factor that was the most commonly mentioned by the communities as necessary for their prosperity. Although some of the communities did find some positive aspects and sometimes new livelihoods in the conflicts, their deleterious effects have by far outnumbered the positive ones.

Migration
Migration and displacement during the conflict were important factors of change for the households. A number of them lost most of their assets while they were away and could barely survive the migration; others were able to find in their host country conditions that allowed them to learn new skills, work, accumulate assets and come back with the ability to recover faster. During this time, even the smallest financial or educational help provided in the camps may have had an important effect on the long-term situation of the poorest.

Access to Capital
The end of the conflict and the drought, and the return from migration, led to a renewed economic growth, mostly driven by a restarting agriculture and helped by the reconstruction effort. If the positive impact of peace is shared by almost all, the effects of this new economic growth are less universally shared: the benefits essentially vary with access to capital. For some, assets have been damaged or destroyed, pushing families back into poverty. Others, usually the most vulnerable, had to sell part of their assets during the war and migrations, in order to face difficulties encountered in migration. This resulted for a few cases within the sample in a pauperization of the pre-war capital owners.

Access to Growth
The benefit gotten from agricultural growth depends on various factors, at the village level: access to market, to agricultural inputs (among which water is essential), and to knowledge are cited among the most important factors for farmers. Farmers nowadays complain about the high prices of inputs, the low productivity of their land and the low selling prices of their output, leading to a low profitability of land. Furthermore, land is scarce, and even farmers who have access to it are starting to face problems to feed a usually high and growing number of household members.

Rural Exodus
Demographic, productivity and marketing issues are leading a non-negligible part of the sample to turn away from agriculture and seek work opportunities with the government, aid agencies and private sector, either in the nearest city, in Kabul, or in nearby countries. This transformation, particularly visible in the sample, which is perhaps biased by the proximity to large cities, shows the first symptoms of a rural exodus.

Urban Pauperization
This new migrant population faces a limited capacity of absorption in the cities of their choice: food and accommodation are expensive, and job opportunities in the cities are not numerous. The migration of unskilled, illiterate farmers to the city increases the number of urban, unemployed or part-time, vulnerable workers living in the fringe of the cities.

2. Strategies
To face the events of the last ten years, and to adapt to new conditions and perspectives, households adopted and often combined several strategies.

Migration
Migration, whether it be forced by events or voluntary, has led to different outcomes for the households, often varying with initial level of skills and individual agency. Skilled people seem to have coped better with the exile than farmers or unskilled workers. In addition, a number of interviewees mentioned that they were able to acquire skills during their time away from home. These skills proved useful in rebuilding their lives upon their return.

Children
On the whole, households consider that the best strategy to move out of poverty is to have children, and rely on inter-generational solidarity as an ultimate safety net. The degree of assistance provided by the extended family (outside the household) largely shrunk during the conflict, as did the degree of cooperation between people in the same village. Traditional social safety nets still exist, but in a weakened form, and are confined to minimal assistance to the poorest. The social cohesion of the communities in the sample does not extend much further than a peaceful cohabitation and performance of the most necessary maintenance tasks on the community infrastructure.

Education
Thus, nowadays, the poor rely essentially on the next generation, i.e. their children, to move out of poverty. To broaden the effect of this strategy, they place most of their hopes in education, when they can afford it, and in most cases, they focus on male children, who will be allowed by Afghan culture to work.

Female Work
Female work is rarely considered as a strategy to move out of poverty. Given the level of disparity in compensations for male and female work as well as women's extremely limited capacity of movement, allowing women to work is generally more of a short-term coping strategy for the poorest. At the other extremity of the ladder of life, some women among the most educated can benefit from the generalized lack of skilled or educated women in the country by getting access to high-profile, gender-friendly positions – but in the villagers opinion, they have not really moved out of poverty, having been out of it for a long time already.
Economic Diversity
While children grow up and attend school, preparing a better future for their parents, poor households rely, when they can, on the multiplication of income generating activities to deal with the present. They find little income in each, therefore multiply them as much as they can, in an opportunistic way. Relying on off-farm activities has proved to be an excellent strategy in the villages most affected by the drought and the ban on poppy (Nangarhar).

Commuting
Access to off-farm activities is often limited by the distance to the main nearby city. Settlement to the city is often expensive for the poor; the sample shows (by design) more a daily commuting to the city than a seasonal migration. Commuting offers two advantages: it allows people to maintain farming activities on a more regular basis than during seasonal migration, and it lets them save on the higher costs of food and accommodation in the city. It is, on the other hand, hindered by the lack of transportation facilities.

Illegal Activities
Illegal activities have proven, in the study timeframe, to bring interesting and unexpected sources of income. Weapons smuggling was an opportunistic activity for a while (Parwan), but it disappeared as fast as it came. Poppy has been the best way to recover faster (Parwan), or to accumulate a small capital allowing for future diversification (Padaw). However, it has also led to a large dependency on this easy but temporary source of income (Sultanpur), leaving the weakest of the farmers in a quite desperate situation when the ban was enforced.

3. Traps & Vulnerabilities
All focus group participants acknowledge the extreme difficulty for poor households to move up. The lack of access to capital and the generally limited capacity to accumulate are mentioned as key factors trapping households in poverty.

The lack of saving capacity is directly linked to the low income of households, which is in turn essentially caused by the lack of skills and the saturation of the labor market with unskilled workers. Since rents can put an important weight on households’ expenditure, the ownership of a house is often seen as making the difference between poor and non-poor households. In addition, the absence of credit facilities, besides family and friends, hinders the ability of households to access working capital, which would help households start saving.

In addition to the poverty traps, the sample even shows a large vulnerability of the households that are above the community-perceived poverty line. All steps but the highest are considered by the focus group participants as being vulnerable to both major events (for the best off) and even minor events of life (for the rest). For instance, the average total income of a household that is just above the community-perceived poverty line does not exceed, in most of the visited places, US$ 80 / month for a numerous household: in these conditions, having to accommodate a guest for a few weeks or to pay for health care across the border can be major costs.

Most of the interviewed households are extremely vulnerable to factors they have no control over. These include a number of economic variables such as import and export duties, exchange rates, inflation or, to a lower extent, oil prices. The cost of living is considered to be exceedingly high, compared to the low revenues obtained by the large majority from agricultural activities or unskilled labor. The high exchange rate of the Afghan currency compared to those of surrounding countries is considered to limit the Afghan capacity to export or sell on the domestic market locally produced agricultural goods, thus favoring imports to the detriment of local production and hindering the overall development of an Afghan industry. In addition, goods that are essential to develop

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1 In each community, villagers were asked to indicate the step on the “Ladder of Life” at which a household would no longer be considered poor in their community. The lower steps represent the position of the poorest, the higher that of the best off in the community. See section I.1.2.1-2, Methodology.
production, such as improved seeds and fertilizers are often imported, therefore expensive and difficult to find.

**C. Policy Implications**

Until recently, the major part of the Afghan poor was thought to live in rural areas. The traditional central role of agriculture in the country’s economy, the important potential seen in agricultural production and counter-narcotics policies led the focus of international aid to be placed on the rural sphere.

From the communities in this study it appears that urban households are already the most vulnerable, and that this situation is likely to worsen with a starting rural exodus. While the current policies for urban development address the question of public services delivery, little is planned to help absorb a growing population of urban poor in the economy. The focus of future policies will need to increasingly address potential livelihoods alternatives for those who are moving away from agriculture.

The strategies used to commute to province centers observed in the study are an interesting behavior to explore. They allow a certain form of flexibility and risk management, while they do not weigh as much as seasonal migration on the cities’ infrastructures and public services. The lack of public peri-urban transportation facilities is considered a problem for both commuters and small farmers in need of quick access to wholesale markets for their products.

The opportunistic migration to Pakistan (essentially) is still for large numbers of households a way to palliate limited resources in Afghanistan, and the high cost of living there. Future policies reducing these migrations might have a major impact on these households.

The lack of skills is a problem already acknowledged by the government, and the ANDS expresses the wish to train 150,000 men and women in marketable skills by the end of 2010. The large mass of the rural migrants, seasonal and semi-permanent, are likely to be unskilled and to put pressure on the disorganized urban labor markets. The monitoring and organization of these markets might prove necessary, in order to define appropriate policies to absorb as much of the incoming workforce as possible and to train people in useful skills.

Both the urban and the rural poor that were surveyed claim that poor access to credit is a major hurdle to their development. The credit that is currently available through micro-finance institutions is seen as useful for small activities, but the credit ceilings are far too low to be used to gain access to working capital, and repayment terms are too short, with too high interest rates for short-term credit.

The impact on the poor of the mentioned macro-economic factors should be properly assessed if a series of pro-poor strategies are to be devised, keeping in mind that a small variation on income or prices can have a large impact on households’ poverty level.

Finally, the impact of community-based development programs such as NSP\(^1\) seems to be generally positive in the visited communities. These programs serve two purposes in addition to bringing development projects to the communities: they strengthen community cooperation and networks and they build capacity among community leaders. The sample communities show good progress in these two goals, although there remains considerable room for improvement in both. A sustained attention and legitimacy given to CDCs is likely to help build on these achievements.

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\(^1\) NSP: the National Solidarity Program, a rural development program involving Community Development Councils (CDCs). See p. 61.
1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and Scope of the Study

This study is the Afghan section of an international study led by the World Bank across 17 countries, with the purpose “to learn retrospectively from those who were once poor but have moved out of poverty and stayed out of poverty in different political, governance and economic environments.” The study particularly explores the relationship between mobility and conflict from the perspectives of poor Afghani’s who have endured protracted and varied conflicts well beyond the 1996-2006 period covered by the study.

The more precise goal of a country analysis like this one is to understand from the bottom-up the different factors that have helped communities and households step out or stay out of poverty within the particular context of the country over the past ten years.

The research was organized according to a list of broad research questions:

- How and why do some men and women move out and stay out of poverty while others are able to maintain their wealth, some fall, and some remain trapped? What wealth maintenance strategies do people use?
- Do people experience mobility differently under contexts of fast and slow economic growth? Does the extent of global integration affect people's mobility?
- Are there gender differences?
- Do networks and social identity matter in men's and women's upward climbs?
- Does the quality of local governance, "depth" of democracy and freedom make a difference?1

Limitations of Scope

In Afghanistan, for various reasons, the scope of the study was limited to six communities. Although chosen with care, they represent a minor part of the country's estimated 38,000 communities.2 One unique urban community was chosen, the rest of them were rural communities. Only four provinces were visited out of the thirty-four Afghan provinces. The visited communities were all located within 1h30 drive of a provincial capital. They were all located in relatively stable and secure areas, which in addition to the small sample size also calls for caution in interpretation of findings. Obviously, the selection of these communities cannot be, in any way, considered as representative of Afghanistan: people living in insecure, remote or rich urban areas as well as nomad people, Uzbek and Turkmen communities are not (among many others) represented here. Furthermore, by design, the study had to focus on small neighborhoods of a few hundred households. This small size creates a feeling of homogeneity at the community level that may not exist in larger villages.

Following the requirements of the international study, the Afghan study had to focus on the last ten years (1996-2006). 1996 is precisely the time at which the Taliban came to power in Kabul. One issue represented by this timeframe was defining what “ten years ago” precisely meant for each interviewee. This was solved through consultation with he interviewers at the beginning of the field work in each village. In addition, in Afghanistan’s case, the ten year timeframe created artificial “movers” and “fallers”: for instance, a person who was rich 12 years ago might have been negatively affected by the Taliban's rise to power ten years ago. Since the end of the Taliban regime, this person could have risen again above the community-perceived poverty line and he or she would have to be considered a “mover”.

Finally, if the sample size rules out any possibility of being representative, it also forbids the usage of large parts of the analytical framework provided by the World Bank. It is impossible to draw proper

2 Source: Central Statistical Office, Household Survey, 2005
As a consequence, the data collected in these six communities will be used in this “national report” for two purposes:

- Present each community as an *ideal type*, representing a specific set of intertwined factors and situations.
- Answer some of the research questions by analyzing *across the communities* the expressed factors of mobility, their interactions and prerequisites;

The data collected in Afghanistan will take its full meaning when compared to other country data, in the last phases of the project - but this is outside the scope of this report.

### 1.2. Study Methodology

The methodology used for sampling was adapted to the specificities of the Afghan context. The tools used for data collection, however, essentially followed the guidelines provided by the World Bank.

#### a. Sampling

The sampling method used a few variables (ethnicity, status of the conflict, food intake, poppy cultivation, migration history, the donors’ assistance as well as a development index built for this study) to select provinces, then districts within these provinces. The selection of the villages was made in coordination with local authorities, to better reflect the specific situations of the districts.

The sampling led to the selection of the following six communities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Urban/ rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K1</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>Kabul, 13</td>
<td>Dasht-e Barchi</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2</td>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>Bagram</td>
<td>Dasht-e Rabat</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Surkh Rod</td>
<td>Sultanpur-e Sufla</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2</td>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Bati Kot</td>
<td>Padaw</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Zinda Jan</td>
<td>Qala-e Reg</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>Guzara</td>
<td>Kunjan</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 - Selected Communities*

In Kabul area, Dasht-e Barchi is a poor, urban neighborhood located at the fringe of Kabul; Dasht-e Rabat is a rural community in the Shamali plain, north of Kabul, heavily destroyed by the war, and with an economy consisting mainly in raisin production.

For Nangarhar Province, two villages were selected: Sultanpur-e Sufla is located 7 km west of Jalalabad, has a long history of poppy production, and has been severely affected by the drought. Padaw is located on the main road from Jalalabad to the Pakistani border, and is an irrigated area consisting mainly in governmental farms.

In Herat Province, the mainly agricultural village of Qala-e Reg is located on the road to Iran, and benefits from this proximity; the village of Kunjan is located near the airport, a few kilometers from Herat city, and nowadays benefits from a newly created industrial park.

The sampling method is given in more details in the Annex 1. Each community is more fully described in short cases studies in the Annex 2.

#### b. Data Collection Method

The data collection method followed precisely the recommendations of the World Bank methodology. A total of 414 interviews were conducted, including 91 close-ended questionnaires, in addition to a number of *ad-hoc* unstructured interviews conducted at national, provincial, district and community levels. The tools that were used were provided by the World Bank:

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1 These case studies represent the conclusion of *Community Synthesis Reports* provided in annex of this report.
Key informant interviews
- The Community Profile was a questionnaire involving one or two key informants. It was completed after the end of field work in each community, by putting together basic indicators collected via other tools;
- The Community Timeline aimed at collecting the major events that occurred in the community, with a specific focus on the two or three most important positive and negative factors of change;
- The Conflict Timeline involved two to three key informants, and aimed at better understanding the trajectory of the conflict in the community, and its impact on mobility.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
- The “Ladder of Life” exercise was conducted with one male and one female group in each village. The aim of this focus group discussion was to define categories or segments of the village population, based on well-being indicators, as well as to define the community-perceived poverty line (or ladder step) at which a household was no longer considered poor by residents in that community; it led to a Household Sorting exercise, where participants were asked to position approximately 100 households on a step of the ladder, now and ten years ago;
- The “LFPD” FGD was a general discussion about Livelihoods, Freedom, Power and Democracy, exploring the impact of these factors on the well-being of the communities and their members;
- The Youth FGD was similar to the LFPD FGD, but involved youth groups (one male group and one female group per community). It included specific questions about the aspirations of the youth.

The sorting of the households conducted in the two Ladder of Life exercises was used to isolate four categories of households:
- Households that were above the community-perceived poverty line (or ladder step) ten years ago and are still above now, defined as Chronic Rich;
- Households that crossed the community-perceived poverty line from below to above, defined as Movers;
- Households that crossed the community-perceived poverty line from above to below, defined as Fallers;
- Households that were under the community-perceived poverty line ten years ago, and are still now, defined as Chronic Poor.

This basic typology helped isolate households targeted for the one-to-one interviews:

One-to-one interviews
- The Household Questionnaire was a close-ended interview gathering a large set of indicators about the household situation now and ten years ago. It represents the quantitative part of the study. 15 household questionnaires were conducted in each community;
- Among the 15 interviewed households, 10 were chosen to conduct Individual Life Stories, which were qualitative, open-ended interviews describing the life story of the household.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Profile</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Timeline</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD: Ladder of Life</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD: LFPD</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD: Youth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Timeline</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Questionnaires</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Life Stories</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>414</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Summary of Data Collection Tools and Informants
1.3. Description of the Poverty and Mobility Measures used for Analysis

No proper census is available for Afghanistan, nor any complete household income and expenditure survey yet\(^1\). Thus, there is currently no official poverty line defined for Afghanistan.

The community-perceived poverty line was compared with a poverty measure based on an evaluation in 2003\(^2\) of the average purchase cost on Afghan markets for enough food to reach the minimum of 2,100 Kcal / person / day, with basic food diversity. This figure was corrected to take price inflation into account, and rounded to 6,000 AFA (US$ 120) per month for a typical family of seven people, including three adults and four children. It is equivalent to US$ 0.57 / person / day, far less than the international poverty line usually taken of US$ 1 / day. Note that this figure is not based on National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) of 2003 but is only a rough estimate based on the calculations of the Afghanistan study team.

This figure is equivalent to 200 AFA / day for the whole family. This can be compared to the income of unskilled labor workers, usually observed at 100 to 200 AFA / day.

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\(^1\) In 2005, the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment collected data on a number of food and non-food items in order to have measures of vulnerability and to provide the GoA with data to sustain a risk monitoring and response structure.

\(^2\) Sources: NRVA 2003 and rural market prices collected by the Vulnerability Analysis Unit.
2. National Conditions and Trends

2.1. Macroeconomic Conditions and Trends

a. Growth and Economic Structure

Very little reliable or complete data is available on the major macroeconomic indicators for Afghanistan. The GDP growth is calculated by the IMF, but data is not available per sector or per province.

Afghanistan, since 2002, has witnessed significant growth in its legal GDP, explained by the re-launch after 2001 of a nearly stopped local economy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
<td>$182</td>
<td>$199</td>
<td>$253</td>
<td>$294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP annual growth</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer prices</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance of Payments (%GDP)</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Key Macroeconomic Indicators

The primary legal economic sector remains agriculture, representing an estimated 37% of the total GDP (including opium) in 1383 (2004/2005), and generating two-thirds of the recent economic growth of the country. Other sectors, largely informal, remain relatively small: manufacturing accounts for 9% and construction for 4%.

b. Donors’ Assistance

Among the other important drivers of growth are international assistance, the presence of international troops, and the legal trade generated by opium money.

b. Donors’ Assistance

Donors’ assistance represents roughly 40% of the legal GDP, and covers as much as 90% of the national budget expenditures. As such, it plays an essential role in the development of the country. The recent trends in assistance indicate a shift from emergency assistance to reconstruction projects, and from these to more long-term development projects. A good illustration of this trend is given by the types of agricultural assistance. An important part of this assistance specifically focuses on

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1 Source: IMF. GDP and growth figures do not include opium.
providing alternative livelihoods to poppy growers, working in several directions, from quick-impact income generation projects to long-term cluster-based development and regional strategies.

Map 1 – Committed Alternative Livelihoods Funds by Province - 1384 (2005/2006)

While the international community renewed in February 2006, at the London Conference, its commitment to continue providing aid to Afghanistan for the next five years, the amount of assistance actually disbursed in the fiscal year 1384 (2005/2006) is said to have decreased. The large discrepancy between pledged, committed and disbursed funds is the result of several factors including an unstable security situation and an absorption capacity which is limited by the lack of efficient human resources at all levels.

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1 The figure for 1383 fiscal year (2004/2005) was estimated at 92%
2 For more details, see Altai Consulting for the Embassy of Japan, 2006
3 Source: UNODC, Alternative Livelihoods Database
The figure below shows the notable difference between pledges, commitments and disbursements for US funds for Afghanistan:

![Graph showing US Assistance to Afghanistan](graph.png)

**Figure 2 - US Assistance to Afghanistan**

### Opium Economy

Opium remains a major source of income in the Afghan economy. UNODC estimated that the total export value of Afghan opium reached US$ 2.7 billion in 2005, equivalent to 52% of the official GDP, 21% of which goes to the farmers and 79% to the traffickers.

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Map 2 - Afghanistan: Opium Poppy Cultivation by Province, 2003-2005

After a dramatic rise in hectares (ha) cultivated in 2004 and a slight decrease in 2005, this amount was expected to rise again in 2006, in spite of eradication campaigns dismissed as largely symbolic. UNODC reports that eradication campaigns destroyed 5,000 ha out of 104,000 ha cultivated in 2004.

The opium economy involves at least 2 million Afghans. While they are not the ones who profit from it the most, farmers get a very good source of income from poppy. Quite often, it is the only cash crop cultivated along with subsistence crops. Finding alternative livelihoods for them has been an important goal of agriculture development programs in the last years. As of June 2005, an estimated US$ 1.2 billion has been committed to these projects for a period of 10 years.

d. Security

Security has been an increasingly preoccupying issue in the last four years, worsening significantly in 2006. Indeed, in 2006, the threats and attacks which were for a while confined to the southern and
eastern provinces started spreading to provinces that had been traditionally safer, and the overall risk is growing in spite of a large deployment of international forces¹.

The growing insurgency in spite of the Afghan and foreign troops’ efforts undermines the population’s confidence in the future, its trust in the current government and in the pertinence of the foreign presence. Around the time of the field work, some of the most endangered southern provinces decided to create local militias to enforce security conditions; some of these militias are already sponsored by the government.

Security is obviously a major preoccupation for foreign investors who are refrained from starting activities in the country because of its unsafe reputation. It also hinders the capacity of the government and the international aid community to encourage the development of many insecure areas.

A major issue for all, security is defined by the government as the first pillar of its National Development Strategy (ANDS, see p. 17).

e. Poverty

The mostly rural Afghan population, who, before the war, lived largely on incomes from a flourishing agriculture, suffered severely from the 25 years of conflict and the drought that occurred between 2001 and 2004. The different conflicts have left behind massive destruction and/or lack of maintenance of infrastructures (e.g. road, irrigation structures), as well as large amounts of landmines which have sometimes blocked the access to fields for years. The war and the drought also led to dramatic losses in livestock (evaluated by some observers to up to 80% of the livestock park), worsening the conditions of the poorest and more isolated population, and letting previously non-poor people fall back into poverty.

Urban poverty is only partially described in the literature. The only available data, collected by the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) in 2005 represents the first accessible vulnerability data for urban households, and is currently being analyzed. However, the initial results from this dataset seem to show that, in general, the urban populations are already more vulnerable than the rural ones. This coincides with, and is partially explained by, the start of a movement of the rural poor to the cities, in search for employment opportunities (see section II-4).

Map 3 – Average Number of Months without Work per Household - 2005²

¹ The total number of foreign troops deployed should reach 30,000 in 2006
² Source: NRVA 2005, preliminary results
2.2. **Key Policies Related to Growth, Policy Focus and Poverty Reduction**

The key development strategies of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) are defined in the *Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy*, presented by the GoA to the IMF as an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The first two pillars of this strategy try to address the major issues of lack of security and absence of rule of law.

![Figure 3 - I-ANDS Programmatic Framework](image)

The third pillar focuses on economic and social development. To ensure growth, the ANDS plans to build on four specific sectors:

- Agriculture, pastoralism, agro-business and rural enterprises;
- Productive use of state assets;
- Mining and extractive industries;
- Regional cooperation, trade and transit.

Among the key policies highlighted by the ANDS, to ensure that the poor will benefit from this growth, are:

- Skills development: resource study to be completed by end 2006, training of 150,000 Afghans in marketable skills by end 2010;
- Rural financial services: access to financial services for 800,000 rural households by end 2010;
- Rural enterprise development: a policy and regulatory framework to support small and medium rural enterprises and facilitate entrepreneurial initiatives by rural communities to be developed by end 2010;
- Support to vulnerable women: number of chronically poor female-headed households to be reduced by 20%, and their employment rate increased by 20%, by end 2010;
- Urban development and housing: increased capacity to manage urban development, investment in public services delivery, access to piped water for 50% of households in Kabul, 30% in other major cities, by end of 2010.

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1. Source: GoA, March 2006
2. Source: idem, sections 5 and 8
2.3. Differences between Policymakers’ and Community Timelines

a. Security

As stated in the ANDS framework and the Afghanistan Compact, security has a central role in the government’s strategy. The visited communities systematically link their well-being and their potential for development to security.

In the visited locations, security has improved greatly since 2001: the following table shows that 46% of the interviewees think that their community was very violent in the past, and is very peaceful now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now \ 10 years ago</th>
<th>Very Peaceful</th>
<th>Moderately Peaceful</th>
<th>Moderately Violent</th>
<th>Very Violent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Peaceful</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Peaceful</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 90

Table 4 – Security in the Villages, compared to 10 Years Ago

The security situation is very good right now. I don’t feel in danger these days. The government has collected the illegal armed groups’ weapons. There are numerous security check-points in the city. The coalition forces and ISAF ensure good security in the city. There are many economic opportunities. People want to work, not fight. – Nadir Ali, male, shopkeeper, Conflict Timeline, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

This point is obviously limited by the selection of the sampled areas: all the visited communities belong to safe environments, particularly when compared to the most difficult southern and eastern provinces. It is to be noted that even in these areas, as in nearly all of Afghanistan, the security situation remains unstable, and might change very quickly.

b. Economic Policies

Economic policies were rarely mentioned in the communities. Most of the interviewees did not have any idea about the actions of the government.

A number of people nevertheless expressed the need for protectionist regulations to protect them against competition from foreign imports:

If we get enough water for irrigation and if the government digs deep wells, our situation can improve. The import of agricultural products from Iran and Pakistan should be controlled because these products affect our community’s production. – Abdul Rahman, male, worker, 52, Ladder of Life, Kunjan, Herat

More generally, the interviewees place significant hopes in the government’s actions, often not realizing what the government is capable or not of doing: many mention that the government should build factories, create employment, subsidize their production, or bring them water (which would sometimes translate into large and costly infrastructure projects that would only irrigate very small valleys). Many farmers regret the role the government took in the past in agriculture: advice on what to grow, how to grow it, where to purchase good seeds and fertilizers, etc. A farmer in Qala-e Reg wishes that the government had a more active role in influencing market dynamics:

The government must purchase our products and sell them on its own market. For example, we can not sell our raisin at a suitable price, because we only have a small amount but if the

1 ISAF: International Security Assistance Force is a NATO-led multinational army. Its main roles are to help secure the country, train the Afghan National Army and participate in the reconstruction effort.
A criticism of the current economic policy was raised in Kabul a few months prior to the field work, by members of the Parliament and some Afghan intellectuals, and is nowadays repeated among the population. It voices doubts about the necessity for the Afghan economy to rely on free market dynamics. These doubts are largely the legacy of the communist years, which were for some the years of efficient and quick development:

“This government is relying on a free market policy. We became a consuming country; everything is imported, we do not have factories to work in... The economic policy of our government is not a right policy and, day by day, the poor become poorer and the rich get richer.” – Awaz, male, carpet weaver, 33, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

c. Poppy

The cultivation of poppy was officially banned by the Interim Administration of Afghanistan in early 2002. This decision was little respected and enforced until 2004, when the first eradication campaigns of some importance took place. At the London Conference in 2006, the GoA launched a new National Drugs Control Strategy (NDCS), with four objectives: targeting the traffickers and their backers and eliminating the basis for the trade; strengthening and diversifying legal rural livelihoods; reducing the demand for illicit drugs and treatment of drug users; strengthening state institutions both at the centre and in the provinces.

The ANDS nevertheless explains that “eliminating a third to 40% of Afghanistan’s economy without endangering security and stability will require massive resources and time.”1

In the meantime, if the successive eradication campaigns actually destroyed a very marginal part of the planted fields, they were but a small part of a larger counter narcotics campaign which had a psychological impact to some degree. While many farmers continue to cultivate poppy they know that it is illegal, and many of them are uneasy about it.

In terms of timing, many farmers consider the enforcement of the ban and the eradication to occur too soon: they think that they did not have time yet to rebuild their assets, and that the country is not ready to provide alternative opportunities for them.

“The government is not helping us at all. It does not allow us to cultivate poppy. We don’t know how we are going to survive.” – Khudai Noor, male, farmer, 25, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

In Nangarhar, an exception among the traditionally poppy-intensive provinces, a combination of pledges of development projects and the province governor’s influence on the tribal elders in the province led to a massive reduction (estimated to 96%) in the production in 2005.

The production, however, was apparently restarted a year later in the lesser exposed districts of the province, either because the farmers had finished selling opium reserves accumulated in the previous years or because the amount of assistance immediately disbursed was judged too low, or both.

The US Secretary of State promised in her last visit to the country (June 2006) quick impact funds to address the problem created by the lag in disbursement.

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1 Source: ANDS, 2006
II. Main Factors of Movement

1. Summary of Most Important Factors of Movement

Below are presented the two main positive and negative factors of change for each community, as expressed by the key informant interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Key informants</th>
<th>Male FGD</th>
<th>Female FGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>Dasht-e Barchi</td>
<td>End of the Taliban</td>
<td>The new government</td>
<td>Access to water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Road construction</td>
<td>Return from exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>Dasht-e Rabat</td>
<td>Irrigation structure</td>
<td>Irrigation and agri. inputs</td>
<td>Irrigation, NSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other reconstructions</td>
<td>Other reconstructions</td>
<td>Other reconstructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Sultanpur-e Sufia</td>
<td>End of soviet regime</td>
<td>Reconstruction process</td>
<td>Improvement of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poppy cultivation</td>
<td>End of the Taliban</td>
<td>Road construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padaw</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canal building</td>
<td>Poppy cultivation</td>
<td>Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surge in poppy prices</td>
<td>Skills training in migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>Qala-e Reg</td>
<td>Daud regime</td>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>Road and school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electricity project</td>
<td>Improved education</td>
<td>Literacy and skills training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunjan</td>
<td>Reconstruction process</td>
<td>New government</td>
<td></td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victory of Mujahidin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 – Two Most Important Positive Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Key informants</th>
<th>Male FGD</th>
<th>Female FGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>Dasht-e Barchi</td>
<td>Taliban regime</td>
<td>Tanzim fights</td>
<td>War and corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzim fights</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Land issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>Dasht-e Rabat</td>
<td>Destruction of irrigation</td>
<td>Taliban conflict</td>
<td>Taliban conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taliban conflict</td>
<td>Forced migration</td>
<td>Destructions due to war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Sultanpur-e Sufia</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>War and corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ban on poppy</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padaw</td>
<td></td>
<td>Soviet invasion</td>
<td>War and corruption</td>
<td>Ban on poppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ban on poppy</td>
<td>Ban on poppy</td>
<td>War and corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>Qala-e Reg</td>
<td>Poverty, unemployment</td>
<td>The Taliban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Low prices in market</td>
<td>Lack of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunjan</td>
<td>Communism regime</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Migration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Unemployment, poverty</td>
<td>The Taliban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Two Most Important Negative Factors

2. The Conflicts

2.1. The Trajectory of Conflict

a. History

The purpose of this study is not to retrace the history of the conflict in detail, but it must be taken into consideration, given that people in each visited village have been affected to some extent by the conflict at some point or another. The twenty-two years following the invasion of the Soviet troops (1979) were marked by different levels of fighting, between different actors. This period of time can be broken down into three different phases:

- The conflict amongst different Mujahidin tanzims (factions), from 1992 to 1996
- The conflict between the Mujahidin and the Taliban regime, from 1996 to 2001

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1 The factors mentioned at the household levels are displayed in Table 28 and Table 29, page 78

2 For more details, see the indicative country timeline in Annexes
The Taliban regime per se did not lead to a conflict situation in all of the villages of the sample. In some cases, the villages were not even directly impacted by the conflict, but they were still affected, through issues linked to security and prosperity, and “minor” problems with freedom. It is nevertheless considered by the villagers as part of the 25 years of continuous conflict that affected the country, and will therefore be considered in this study as such.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Soviet</th>
<th>Tanzims</th>
<th>Taliban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>Dasht-e Barchi</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>Dasht-e Rabat</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Sultanpur-e Sufa</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Padaw</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>Qala-e Reg</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>Kunjan</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 – Impact of the Different Periods of Conflict on the Communities

In Nangarhar, the Taliban’s ouster did not immediately bring about a better security. The end of the Taliban regime – commonly recognized for its ability to enforce (often brutally) security – left a void leading to a number of security incidents.

At the beginning of Karzai’s regime, there was a lot of armed theft, as well as raping and kidnapping of our daughters and wives. It was a difficult period too. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufa, Nangarhar

Conflict is still present at various levels in Afghanistan, but five of the visited locations do not experience it directly, and it appears more as a general feeling of continued insecurity and instability. The only exception is Qala-e Reg (Herat), where recent fights between commanders have occurred at the province level:

This year, several fights broke out between commander Amanullah Khan and Ismail Khan. Commander Karim started fighting from Ghorian district in favor of commander Amanullah Khan. Some people from our community joined the fighting. Several people died. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

b. Chain of Events

The conflicts have been for a majority of households the key events that impacted, directly or indirectly, their livelihoods. In some cases, they led to massive killing and destruction; for the people who did not take an active part in the fighting, the conflict often provoked a migration. In Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), a large part of the population escaped during the Mujahidin fighting, and again during the Taliban regime; in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), the village was totally abandoned in 1999.

Migration, as will be seen in section II.3H-3, did not have the same impact on everyone, but usually led to further losses of property when people were away. The return from abroad was, again, more difficult for some households than for others, leading to a recovery phase more or less difficult, depending on the impact of the conflict, the situation upon return, personal skills and individual agency, among many other factors that will be analyzed throughout the report.

Figure 4 - Conflict: Chain of events

1 A “moderate” impact is attributed when conflict was limited in time and the number of people directly involved, only occasionally leading to some killings, and created some general lowering of the economic activity but no major displacement of the population.
2.2. Impact on Key Livelihoods

a. Looting, Destruction & Killing

The larger impact on livelihoods was due to direct looting, destruction and killing. All the surveyed communities suffered, in one or other of the conflicts, from massive destruction.

All the villages suffered human losses during the war, not to mention torture, imprisonment, and the killing of people directly involved in the conflict: in Padaw (Nangarhar), during the conflict between the tanzims, in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan) during the fighting between the Mujahidin and the Taliban, in Qala-e Reg and Kunjan (Herat) during the first conflict, opposing the Mujahidin and the Soviets.

This area was supplying help for the Mujahidin. This is the reason why Soviet troops were always bombing us and attacking our properties. Around 300 people died and approximately 150 were badly injured and became disabled. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Our area was under air and ground attacks by the Soviets, because our area was with the Mujahidin. The consequences of these conflicts were huge for us. Around one thousand died. People did not have time to bury them. Houses and trees were burnt and a large number of people migrated. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

For the most part, people suffered from the massive loss of their assets, again, directly (through destruction or theft) or indirectly (by devaluation). All villages suffered from looting during the periods of conflict, particularly when the villages were deserted by their inhabitants, who escaped to other places:

[When the Taliban took power,] people were not killed but our houses were looted. A lot of people emigrated out of the village and the fighting injured some civilians. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

During the Mujahidin period, our properties were stolen by the people of Khugiani. A lot of us emigrated to have a better life abroad. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

All communities have suffered from destruction, but massive destruction happened in three cases: in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), when the frontline opposing the Taliban and the Mujahidin was located right on the village, and in both villages of Herat, both directly bombed and besieged:

Yes, some of the land owners who migrated to Iran suffered, because all their trees were cut. Livestock also suffered, because during the Soviet war, this area was under siege for ten months: there was no cultivation, there was nothing to feed them. All of the livestock disappeared. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

When the Taliban came in 1999 [...] they set our houses and our gardens on fire, cut our grapes trees, blew up our irrigation canals. We used to irrigate our lands with these canals and save drinking water for ourselves. Some people were killed and disabled as a result of Taliban attacks. This fighting lasted for three years. – Conflict Timeline, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

b. Impact on Livelihoods

These destructions, looting and killing – again, not to mention the migration period – had an obvious impact on most of the economic activities. In rural areas, livestock was destroyed, trees were cut for firewood, houses were looted and burnt, irrigation structures were destroyed or not maintained, leading to progressive degradation. In addition, accesses to markets were disrupted, so that, among other items, inputs for production were not available anymore. In urban areas, similar degradations happened. It would be out of the scope of this report to list all the impacts on sources of livelihoods the different periods of the conflict had, but a few examples can be of interest.

In the sample, one of the main sources of livelihoods affected by the conflict has been agriculture and livestock. One of the most striking examples in the sample happened in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan),
where the Taliban destroyed the main water intake for irrigation used by this village (among others) in 1996. Despite the absence of conflict in the village itself, this incident was enough to drive away some of the villagers, who knew they could not keep their main crop (grapes) for long without irrigation. Then, in 1999, the vineyards themselves were destroyed, grapevines cut and burnt. The effects of the Taliban period are still visible in this village, for destroyed vineyards take between five and seven years to return to full production.

Similarly, in Qala-e Reg (Herat), silk production, which was one of the main livelihoods for women, has been wiped out by years of conflict, but more specifically because of a collapse in the market during these years:

*During the Taliban, silk worm breeding disappeared because we didn’t have markets to sell the silk in. Agriculture, livestock, education, health and silk were destroyed and people suffered. Now we are producing silk again.* – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In the same village, key informants explain that business in general was halted:

*During the Taliban regime, no entrepreneur wanted to invest in Afghanistan. Afghanistan witnessed 25 years of conflict, but during the Taliban, no construction took place. [Then], poverty was at its peak. We did not have any economic relationship with the rest of the world. All the entrepreneurs fled the country, but after the fall of the Taliban, with the new government, life is better again.* – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In addition, the Taliban forcefully enrolled young villagers in their army, thus further weakening the local economies, particularly in their favorite recruitment areas, such as Nangarhar:

*During the six years of the Taliban regime, our region was suffering from violence and corruption. They were collecting unfair taxes and sending our young people to fight.* – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

c. Livelihoods during the War

It has nevertheless to be noted that both Herat and Nangarhar provinces were somewhat spared by the Taliban, compared to other parts of the country. There, and thanks to a relative political stability at the province and region level, business could continue in many cases.

Some particular livelihoods appeared during and due to the conflict or the specific political situation. Militias employed large numbers of men, and the war money was a source of income for many, directly or indirectly. Smuggling became a very common and profitable activity. For example, in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), some of the residents were affiliated with Mujahidin parties for a long time, and a large number lived on weapons smuggling, thanks to these connections:

*We could not grow products or take care of livestock until after the Taliban. Some people had another economic activity: smuggling weapons. But when the present government came, these people lost this activity.* – Conflict Timeline, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

In Herat, some say that the Taliban pushed them to cultivate poppy, which was not a traditional crop there, before they decided to ban it:

*During the Taliban [regime] all livelihoods disappeared, but one new livelihood emerged which was poppy cultivation. People cultivated poppy for only one year. After that, the Taliban banned it again and they eradicated poppy from the fields.* – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat
2.3. Impact on Households

a. Who Profited

As was seen above, some new sources of livelihoods were created during the conflict. According to interviewees in all the communities, the people who gained the most, directly, from the conflict, were armed commanders. They gained from the war money, sometimes from the looting, and by securing positions of power for the future:

Commanders who were involved in smuggling and who were collecting ushur\(^1\) illegally made more money. Most of them now own good businesses (like mechanic shops). People who were involved in poppy cultivation and smuggling have started new businesses: for example, they bring goods from Pakistan and sell them in Afghanistan. This commerce has badly affected the local farmers. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

Some rich jihadi commanders made a lot of money from tanzims, and now from governmental offices. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

The profits of the war then spread to families belonging to the commanders’ cliques:

Families connected with commanders gained from the conflict. They not only have protection but also power. There are about 30-40 families in this community which benefited. Some of them got official jobs in the government. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

In some cases, as was expressed in Padaw (Nangarhar), commanders showed a clever versatility:

Those who were commanders of jihadi parties gained from these conflicts. They controlled everything and they had power. Around 60 families in the community gained power because during the Mujahedin time, they were with the Mujahedin, and during the Taliban regime, they were with the Taliban to maintain their power and influence. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

In Nangarhar, people involved in poppy cultivation and drug trafficking are among the ones who earned significant amounts of money, some directly and some at least through the absence of enforced regulations against their trade:

During the past ten years, landlords who took advantage of the cultivation of poppy increased their assets. People working with them also benefited from this. The conflict did not affect this group. Only the new government rules affected it because they banned poppy cultivation. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Among the people who were tempted to join armed factions, only a few were able to benefit from this dangerous activity:

Some of the families had to migrate to Iran because of the fighting, and some of the families joined armed groups to earn money, and lost their lives in the fighting. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

While many villagers were drafted in the Taliban army, only a few actually joined the Taliban forces voluntarily:

Around 5% of the people in this community joined the Taliban. After the defeat of the Taliban, [these 5%] migrated from the village, but only for a while. The Taliban took advantage of their position in the government and used the name of Islam to make money. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

\(^1\) Ushur: tenth part of the agricultural production usually collected by governmental officials and normally redistributed to the poor.
Those who earned money with their weapons suffered less than others. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

b. Who Managed to Cope

Besides people who actually profited from the conflict, some people managed to cope better than the others. In these cases, the ability to cope, and in some cases progress, depends highly on the specifics of the conflict and the area.

In general, people who lived near the borders used migration and displacement as a successful strategy, keeping an eye on their assets from time to time:

All the families migrated to Pakistan and one person from each family used to come back to the village and cultivate their lands. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

People who stayed in the village suffered more than others. But in general, all of us have suffered. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

If agriculture was heavily affected, small trade and business was usually more protected:

Independent workers and businesses suffered less than other professions because they were on their own. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

On the whole, for one of the interviewees in Herat, there is one category which neither suffered nor gained from the conflict:

Unemployed people were the least affected, because a jobless man is jobless in any situation. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

c. Who Lost

In general, apart from the aforementioned categories of people, interviewees tend to think that everyone lost during the conflict. The people who lost their assets were among the most severely touched:

Those families which were dependent on agriculture and livestock suffered the most. Most of the families in the community are in this category. Families staying here had to pay the ushur. It was compulsory. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

Surprisingly, in several cases, the rich were cited among the ones who were particularly touched:

Some of the wealthy families lost everything because they were robbed. […] During [that time], wealthy families were more under attack. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Rich people are more vulnerable and at risk during conflicts and wartime. Rich people could not invest their money. Besides that, they were threatened by armed groups: some of them were even killed in other areas. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

Naturally, people who chose the side of the regime in place were particularly targeted by the replacing regime:

During [the tanzim conflicts,] those who had been working for Dr Najibullah’s government lost their jobs and their assets [were looted] when the regime changed. Some of them were meant to be killed but Ismail Khan and Burhanuddin Rabbani announced a general amnesty and they were released. […] During the Taliban, the Mujahidin commanders were at risk. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat
When the Taliban came to this area, schools were shut, all government officials were fired, and the Taliban were hired instead of them. Some people were tortured for having arms but no one was killed. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

2.4. Remains of the War

In all cases, even when the communities were relatively spared compared to others during the Taliban regime, multiple and visible scars of the different conflicts obviously remain. The economy is slowly restarting and those who were able, often by chance, to save their assets, restarted building on them earlier than others.

Among the problems that had to be quickly solved in order to recover, mines were particularly important in Qala-e Reg and Dasht-e Rabat, where the return to the field was hindered by the danger of mines.

After the fall of the communist regime, our area was full of mines and this is still causing a big problem for the village. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In terms of long-term impact of the conflicts, besides the destruction of the infrastructure, the absence of proper education throughout the period is felt as very damaging for the ones who stayed as well as those who could not get access to proper schooling in exile:

Among the negative impacts still remaining of the Taliban in the region is the cultivation of opium and the smuggling of drugs. The education system was destroyed, our rights also damaged and the government didn’t have any power. – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

On the other hand, the end of the conflict in 2001 drew the interest of the international community on the country, and this is seen as a chance in many cases, if only because of the return of security.

Our community is more secure now. Armed people handed over their weapons to their commanders and commanders handed over all the weapons to the government. Now everyone sends their children to school. Previous fighting was due to the low level of education. Security is now maintained by the government and by the district authorities. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

On the whole, the communities of Herat Province seem to be on the quickest way to recovery. Thanks to the proximity with Iran, businessmen of both countries are starting to re-invest in the area:

A few families, maybe 30, are making money. They are involved in small businesses, and compared to ten years ago, their number has increased. A number of them are involved in transportation and some of them are working in manufacturing factories. But these economic changes took place after the fall of the Taliban regime, because during the Taliban government, all the entrepreneurs fled the country. Now, everyday, we witness an increasing number of businessmen and more available working opportunities for them. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

Compared to 10 years ago, now, people have more access to economic opportunities such as: small businesses, production of blocks (concrete bricks) for construction purposes, silk worm breeding, gas and gasoline shops, mobile phone businesses… All of these new sources of livelihoods emerged after the fall of the Taliban. Now we have a water supply system, electricity, our road has been asphalted, a public bath has been constructed, we have schools, and clinics… A school for girls has opened. All these are positive signs that emerged after the end of the Taliban regime. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat
3. Migration

3.1. Migration out of the Country

a. Reasons for Migration

Migration out of the country is often a result of the direct or indirect influence of the conflict: from the Soviet invasion in 1979 to 1992, over six million people left Afghanistan; a large additional number fied the country during the Taliban, adding to the number of refugees. Four million returned between the Taliban's fall and 2006.

In many cases, the conflict had a direct impact on the visited villages, leading villagers to escape. However, economic problems and general insecurity at times where the conflict was not immediately affecting the villages, also often caused migration. In the surveyed communities, most of the villagers left their communities during the three specific conflicts seen above.

The major destinations were Pakistan and Iran. Geographical proximity played an important role in determining where individuals went, but another major consideration for the migrants was the fact that many of them already had family members in these countries. The family usually moved together but in some cases, when the economic situation was difficult but the security was still good, the head of the family was the only one to go and he would send money back to his family.

People from middle and upper classes left the country mostly at the beginning of the eighties. In this case, most of them went to Europe (France, England, Germany), Canada and the USA.

In order to understand the differences between the communities, it is interesting to present a short history of migrations in each community.

People of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul) first moved during the conflict between the government and the Mujahidin (1985-1992) because of the insecurity and uncertainty stemming from the conflict. Some of the villagers came back when the regime was defeated, but most of them had to move again during the Mujahidin factional fighting (1992-1996) because the became even worse than before:

As security and the economy were getting worse day by day, we took the decision to migrate to Pakistan in 1987. We migrated to Peshawar, in Pakistan, and we started a new life. […] In 1995, we returned to our homeland and stayed in Kabul, in my father-in-law’s house in Dasht-e Barchi. As the security situation was worsening in Kabul, we moved back to our former place in Ghorbald (Parwan Province) in 1999. – Ghulam Mohammad’s wife, ILS, mover, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

During the Taliban regime, people also had to migrate to other countries, because the situation was not good. During that time people faced a lot of problems during migration. Nearly every family has had a least one shaheed during those wars – Masrzia, female, housewife, 48, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Finally, most of the villagers in Dasht-e Barchi came back at the end of the Taliban regime:

After the collapse of the Taliban Regime in 2001 we moved back to Kabul and started to rebuild our destroyed houses. Now we have a calm and secure life here. – Ghulam Mohammad’s wife, ILS, mover, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

In Dasht-e Rabat, some of the villagers left in 1996, when the main irrigation structure was destroyed by the Taliban, who had recently taken the Shamali Plain. The massive migration, however, occurred in 1999, when the community found itself on the frontlines of the fighting. A part of the villagers who had had previous contacts with the tanzims fled to Panjsher early: they were the most at risk,

1 Shaheed: martyr.
because of their political affiliations. A few other families moved to Iran, while the remaining ones were displaced by the Taliban to Jalalabad, and from there, moved together to Pakistani Kashmir.

500 families migrated to Kashmir, 50 families migrated to Panjsher and 50 families migrated to Iran. But I think that in the coming ten years, we will have such comfortable conditions that no one will migrate to other places. – Pir Mohammad, male, farmer, 60, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

We migrated in 1999 to Pakistan and lived there for three years. We had many problems there, but we were still feeling comfortable because our life was peaceful. As you know, in 2002, the political situation of the country changed, so we returned to our place and started a new life. Now we have a very comfortable life. – Monir Ahmad's wife, ILS, mover, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

From 1999 to 2001, the village was totally emptied from its inhabitants. People started coming back in 2002, to find the village ruined and heavily mined.

People started coming back to the community in 2002, after the Taliban were defeated. The flow of returnees was also important during 2003 and 2004. – Community Timeline, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

In Sultanpur-e Sufla, people mostly migrated during the invasion of the Soviet troops, in 1979 and started coming back in 1992. They expressed two main reasons to migrate: the lack of security and economic difficulties. Most of them went to Pakistan to work.

During the war between the Mujahidin and Najibullah’s regime, almost everyone in the village migrated to Pakistan. They were dropping bombs on our village and a lot of people died. We went [to Pakistan] in 1980. […] In 1992, the Mujahidin took power and we returned to our village and started farming. – Shaista Gul, mover, ILS, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

People moved out of this community because they wanted to escape from tensions and insecurity and to look for more job opportunities. – Nafas Dil, female, tailor, 40, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

People who were not able to move away usually belonged to the most unprotected social groups, like widows or disabled people.

I know that it was impossible to live here during the fighting, but I haven't migrated because I was alone and my children were small, I also did not have money for migration. – Hassan Bibi, ILS, chronic poor, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

In Padaw (Nangarhar) as in Sultanpur-e Sufla the larger migration occurred when the Soviet troops took power in the area, in the early eighties. For most, the reason to migrate was the fighting and the lack of security.

In 1984, I went to live in Pakistan, because our life here was very sad. One of my sons, who was 14 years old, was killed during the fighting between the Mujahidin and the Russian forces. – Alhaj Saifor, ILS, Mover, Padaw, Nangarhar

Men sometimes migrated alone for lack of economic opportunities in the village. Some of them returned to take part in the conflict, after having ensured the safety of their family:

All members of my family migrated to Pakistan and we lived there from 1980 until 1992. After three months living in Pakistan, I left my family and went to fight with the Mujahidin and I took part in the Jihad. [In 1992], the Mujahidin took our village and I brought my family to Bati Kot. – Haqil Meer, ILS, Chronic Rich, Padaw, Nangarhar
The largest migration off Qala-e Reg (Herat) took place during the heavy fighting between the Mujahidin and the government (1983-1992), while the village was bombed regularly. Most of the families went to Mashad, in Iran and most of them returned in 1992.

In Kunjan (Herat), migration due to the conflict was very similar to the one in Qala-e Reg. People started migrating to Iran in the eighties. The main reason was to find better economic opportunities and to find a better future for their children. Because of the proximity to the airport, the community was surrounded by Soviet forces, and fighting was continuous.

b. Return from Migration

The question of when and how to come back from migration was more subject to households' individual decisions rather than external factors. The choice was a complex one, and it is difficult to evaluate through such a small sample which were the most efficient strategies and schemes. An important base of literature on the subject is available, showing past and ongoing analyses of factors and conditions of return.

A proverb says: ‘khisht e ki yak bar az Dewar bejai shud baz jor namishawad’, ‘When a brick is displaced from its place, it is very difficult to place it correctly again.’ - Sultan Ahmad, male, landowner, 45, Ladder of life, Kunjan, Herat

In the present sample, and correlatively to the principal reasons to migrate, most of the interviewees stated that one of the factors most influencing their return to Afghanistan was the improvement of the security situation and the consequent better economic conditions. The timing of the return, as seen earlier, varied significantly, even for the members of a same village. It seems to sometimes have been conditioned by different levels of expectations towards the economic situation in Afghanistan, as compared to the households' situation in migration: the worst off in migration often came back early, to regain access to their land and houses while some of the best off did not return at all, considering they had more opportunities in their host country than in Afghanistan.

During the war, lots of people left for Iran and Pakistan and did not come back because they are better off now in those countries, but we haven't seen anyone who has became better off in the community, then left. – Gulam Reza, Shopkeeper, 31, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

As an example, most of the carpet weavers of Dasht-e Barchi who have moved to Pakistan during the conflict have not yet returned: the massive displacement of Afghan carpet weavers to Peshawar and its surroundings came with a displacement in the market for carpets. The most skilled and successful of the workers are still in Peshawar, from where the market players still tend to think that it is easier to export. Indicators\(^1\) tend to show that the situation is slowly changing, but the women of Dasht-e Barchi complained of the absence of the most skilled workers and the market linked to them.

Among the people who recovered best were those who took advantage of the migration to learn specific skills. Examples were given in every village:

> I benefited from the masonry skills I have learned in Pakistan and I am also familiar with agricultural work. Now, my economy is good (+3), but there is no change between the life I have now and how I lived in the past. – Abdul Qayum, male, ILS, Chronic Poor, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

> My sons learned the profession of masonry [in Iran] and are currently employed as masons. – Mohammad Alam, male, ILS, mover, Kunjan, Herat

As in other places, some people from Sultanpur-e Sufla came back with newly acquired skills, but some had to move to Jalalabad (the provincial capital) to find jobs involving these skills:

> Some people who learned an occupation that was not applicable in the community such as welding, tailoring or carpentry had to leave this community and go to the city. – Niaz Gul, male, farmer, 26, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Rapid recovery was obviously easier for people who had an income in their host country, and could save some money:

> In 1992, we came back to Afghanistan and we started our life from zero because our house had been completely destroyed. There was no water and our land was not arable. We spent all the money we saved in Iran to rebuild our house and our land. Gradually, our land recovered and our trees started giving fruits. Meanwhile, I found a job in UN-Habitat. – Abdul Hadi, Chronic Rich, ILS, Qala-e Reg, Herat

This saving capacity was, in turn, influenced, among other factors, by the support, however small, of relatives or NGOs, or the size of the family:

> Our economic situation in Pakistan was not very bad, our family was not very large and my youngest brother was driving a rickshaw, so we were able to survive. – Haqil Meer, ILS, Chronic Rich, Padaw, Nangarhar

> The first two years in Pakistan, I was jobless, but in 1987, I received 2,000 kaldar [approx US$ 50] from one organization and my situation started getting better. – Alhaj Saifor, ILS, Mover, Padaw, Nangarhar

> When we went to Iran, in 1984, I had a lot of difficulties because Iran was not our country. During the first two years my life was difficult because I was not able to find a job. I was an indigent. My brothers helped me to find a job in Iran at a kiln. I returned to Afghanistan in 1992. Now, I am an official employee and I also work on my lands. Two of my sons work and

\(^1\) See OTF, *Situation Analysis of the Afghan Hand-Knotted Carpet Cluster, May 2005*
two others are studying. The level of my life is good, now. Ghulam Hazrat, ILS, mover, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Long-term migration as well as individual agency seemed to favor the access to decent positions in the host country:

In 1983, the situation in Afghanistan was getting worse day by day so we went to Iran. At the beginning we faced many difficulties, but gradually we found jobs. In 1984 my husband found a job as a treasurer in one of the factories and our life got better day by day. Sedica, ILS, mover, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Among those who suffered from the return from abroad are the youth and some women, who had more difficulties to acclimatize to Afghan rural areas they had sometimes barely known and which looked harsh to them. Some young women, mostly in Herat, expressed the impression that they had less freedom back in their community than they had had in Iran.

3.2. Seasonal / New Migration / Current Strategies

Seasonal migration is known to be a common strategy of movement for households in Afghanistan, particularly for rural households who have little access to land and large families. However, this situation was not represented in the surveyed communities, since they were usually close to active provincial capitals, and commuting was more frequent.

Conversely, more mid-term migrations to Iran and Pakistan were frequent in the sample, by design since four of the communities were located close to borders. This kind of more recent economic migration is common between the villages of Nangarhar and Pakistan, where it is easier for families to find employment opportunities:

If a person needs money, he normally migrates with his family to Pakistan because in Pakistan there are jobs for everyone. If you have five young boys and all of them go everyday to the city to sell bananas, onions, potatoes, cucumbers, each of them will bring 500 rupees [US$ 8] everyday. In Pakistan, they will have enough to survive. – Nik, male, employee, 45, Ladder of Life, Padaw, Nangarhar

This is made easier by the fact that many still have relatives in Pakistan, and because Afghans currently do not need a visa to go to NWFP Province in Pakistan.

Migration in Iran has become less attractive for several reasons: it is more expensive to get a visa and the strength of the Afghan currency compared to the Iranian makes savings accumulated in Iran worth less upon return to Afghanistan.

We can not go to Iran, the border is very difficult to pass now, you have to spend a lot of money. It costs around 18,000 AFA [US$ 360] which is not affordable. Ladder of Life, male, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Seasonal migration usually concerns only the male members of the family, while mid-term migration can concern young males on their own, the head of the household or the family as a whole.

Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul) presented a somewhat different situation than the other visited communities: while it attracts seasonal and permanent migrants from the rural areas, and is still a destination of return for many refugees, the unemployment rate and the lack of business opportunities make people who came back in the last years think about leaving again, in a long-term, voluntary migration, back to their former exile countries, where they know they will find more opportunities.

3.3. Conclusion

Because of the multiple reasons for migration, often but not only forced by the war, and the variety of situations of the migrants in terms of social network in the destination country, assets taken with them, level of education, individual agency and luck, the impact of migration on mobility is difficult to
evaluate. In such a small sample, where the majority of the population had experienced migration, many situations were found, that can be summarized by the following statements:

- The major part of the migrations that occurred before 2001 was triggered by a major event affecting the communities, either directly or indirectly. In these cases, migration can be considered more a coping mechanism than a strategy of mobility.
- Migration occurring nowadays is more voluntary, and more precisely linked with individual strategies.
- The poorest of the households were often the ones who could not afford to migrate.
- Among the people who migrated, the ones who usually got by better were the ones with a qualification that allowed them to find work in the host country: masons or carpenters were usually in a far better situation than farmers.
- The migration period, if hard for many, often brought new skills to the households; these skills helped them recover faster when they were able to use them upon their return.
- Often, the people who were best off during the migration by managing to create a sound environment in their host country did not return and do not seem to be planning to do so in the near future.

4. Economic Growth

4.1. Who Benefited from the Growth?
As seen earlier, growth data is not available at the province or district levels, and data across sectors can only be roughly evaluated. Unless an approach by proxy is taken\(^1\), based on the consumption data available for some Afghan communities, it is impossible to quantify the different positions of the communities in terms of growth.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify rapidly the main drivers of economic growth that are acknowledged by the visited communities. Imports and the construction sector are often mentioned as two of the sectors providing new economic activities in Afghanistan. As expressed elsewhere, construction is the more accessible of these two, and some examples of residents who found good opportunities in this sector are often shown in the different communities.

The major part of the growth, however, is led by the important growth in the agriculture sector. This growth is essentially due to a progressive restoration of the production level after the end of the civil war and the drought. A milder climate, more precipitations, the maintenance or reconstruction of irrigation structures, and a slightly better access to markets in some areas are key factors of the legal part of the growth of the agriculture sector.

4.2. How do Villages and Households Benefit from the Growth?

a. Rural Households
The benefit rural households can take from agricultural growth varies with different factors: irrigation of the land, land ownership, access to improved seeds and fertilizers, to credit, to shared or owned mechanized tools are among the factors that are mentioned the most often.

Land Tenure
Within a village, what essentially makes the difference is land tenure. A peasant will not benefit from growth as much as a farmer. The contract between a peasant and a landowner is extremely variable from one province to another but the situation in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan) is a good example of how things are done:

\[^1\] This approach was suggested by Andrew Pinney, then special advisor on the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. The NRVA collected data in 2005 on more than 2,000 communities. It was not implemented here, because the only comparative data available between 2003 and 2005 would be food diversity, with uncertainty in the comparison between the two datasets; furthermore, it was not felt appropriate to systematically select villages visited for the NRVA survey in this study.
When peasants grow wheat or vegetables, and they purchase the seeds and fertilizers, they get $\frac{3}{4}$ of the yield, and the landowner $\frac{1}{4}$. Otherwise, they get only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the yield. – Male Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

In all the rural communities, having access to arable land is a nearly exclusive condition to upwards movement. Peasants’ families are usually placed just below the threshold or step defined by the community as no longer in poverty.

I think that moving from the peasant category to the farmer category is difficult because people of the first category need funds to buy more agricultural lands. People who have land inherited it from their fathers. – Anjamuddin, male, teacher, 50, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

Acquisition of land is not easy for farmers, because they usually cannot save enough money for this. They are only able to buy land in specific and rare situations:

These families can acquire some land from the government “in installments”, or can work on government land that is leased at a price that is lower than usual. They can also be helped by their children, when they grow up. – Ladder of Life, Qala-e Reg, Herat

**Economic Diversification**

Another way for poor rural households to move out of poverty is to diversify their sources of income. The example of government employees was often given in the visited communities. Government employees do not usually earn enough to place them above the community-perceived poverty line, even though, in some cases, their social status (for the literate positions, when they are teachers, for example) places them high on the Ladder of Life. The typical income of a *mamur*, a literate employee, can be of 2,500 to 3,000 AFA (US$ 50 to 60) per month. An *ajir*, occupying an illiterate position, will earn only 2,000 to 2,500 AFA (US$ 40 to 50) per month. A family living solely on such an income is objectively poor. However, their work usually allows them to have a second activity that provides with a complementary income. This way of movement for the *mamur* is often described in the villages:

Maybe they can save a little money. Beside the government employment, they can run a business or do some other work, such as gain some income from working in other people’s fields. – Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

In general, economic diversification and multiplication of activities is a necessary behavior for the households to cope with low income activities: at least 38% of the surveyed households have multiple sources of income and the households acknowledge on average 1.8 activities (similar or different, across the household members) in the family. Furthermore, these figures are likely to be largely under-evaluated, since only 15% of the households mentioned women’s activities as a source of income, which is far lower than what was directly observed.

In Kunjan (Herat), a recently opened industrial park provides the farmers with an opportunity to change activities, when the income from the land is not high enough:

A number of businessmen profited from the growth, they bought different kinds of factories and provided opportunities to a lot of people. A number of people are now working in these factories, located in the industrial park of this district. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

In some cases, the rural households can find new opportunities for work in the general growth of the country: some of the family members find work with NGOs or aid agencies for the reconstruction process, within new government structures, or, to a lesser degree, in growing sectors, like construction and import activities. Some of the quick-impact “cash-for-work” projects propose new, if not durable, opportunities to villagers, sometimes on a large scale.
The farmers who do not have agricultural land can move to higher steps [of the ladder of life], because most of them can have an occupation or a skill and get a good income. They can work in construction and earn a good income, then move to other higher steps. [...] They need only one thing, which is the opportunity to work and security. – Jan Agha, male, farmer, 33, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

Water Problems

Water is a more generalized problem at the village or the neighborhood level, but also creates differences at the household level. Irrigation structures, as will be seen in the section II.6.1.a, are cited in some villages as major improvements.

In addition, water issues impact poppy cultivation: poppy does not need much water, and is often cultivated by farmers who cannot irrigate their fields regularly.

With the exception of Dasht-e Rabat, which had already been devoid of irrigation water since 1999, all the rural communities suffered significantly from the drought, from 2000 to 2004, with slight differences in dates between villages. Sultanpur-e Sufa (Nangarhar) is the one that was the most durably affected, because, unlike in other villages, no action was taken to recreate irrigation structures:

We had more water in the past, but because the drought is still a problem, and the government is not paying attention to our situation, our condition is worsening year by year. We will be better in the next ten years only if the government takes action and builds a new irrigation system. – Akhtar Gul, male, farmer, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufa, Nangarhar

In Herat, while the drought is over, the water-tables did not come back to their normal level, and “if the government solves this problem, then this category can move up.” (Ladder of Life, Qala-e Reg, Herat)

In many cases, irrigation water is paid for by the farmers, and this obviously has an impact on the poorest:

We also pay for irrigation; it costs us 100 AFA for one hour using the water pump. – Khan Bibi, female, housewife, 60, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

The irrigation water distribution is usually managed by a Mirab (water-supply manager). In some cases, his decisions can lead to endless arguments and discussions, as could be observed in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), where the Mirab explained that he did not want to distribute water to a Pashtun of the village, a former member of the Taliban, because the Taliban had burned the houses of the village. The Pashtun then went to see the chief of the village, who forced the Mirab to give him water. This also used to be the case in Qala-e Reg (Herat):

There were many problems in the water distribution, before. Sometimes people fought for water. One year ago, a development program started in the community and we do not have these problems anymore. The population respects his decisions. – Ladder of Life, male, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In every village that is dependent on agriculture, access to irrigation water is said to be one of the primary factors of movement. A farmer can really profit from economic growth and move upwards only if he has enough water, as well as improved seeds and fertilizers.

The working situation is better now, but for landowners and farmers it is not so good, because fertilizers are expensive. Farming equipments are expensive and water is not sufficient. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat
Other Inputs and Tools
In most of the rural communities, farmers insisted on the importance of good seeds and fertilizers, usually remembering the time when the Ministry of Agriculture provided some and when it had competent workers in the districts giving the farmers good advice on how best to use them.

The government should provide cheap and good seeds and fertilizers to the farmers. It should also improve the irrigation water for agriculture by digging deep wells, because we don’t have enough water for agriculture. It should also provide tractors and threshers to the community. – Khorma, female, housewife, 36, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

As for a lot of goods, the prices of seeds and fertilizers have increased in the last years, giving additional difficulties to farmers:

Compared to the past, prices for [agricultural inputs] are more expensive. For example, 7 kg of wheat seeds cost 6 AFA seven years ago, and now they cost about 45 AFA. Fifteen kilos of a good fertilizer cost between 100 and 200 AFA but now they cost 700 AFA. – Khan Bibi, female, housewife, 60, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Previous research\(^1\) showed that the quality and the origins of fertilizers vary significantly. In 2005, farmers in Nangarhar relied on fertilizers smuggled from Pakistan, the Pakistani government having declared a ban on fertilizer exports. In the North, very poor quality fertilizers are imported from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan without any regulation or quality checking. In Herat (not visited at the time of the research), the situation might be better, thanks to the proximity with Iran. There is only one fertilizer (urea) factory currently working in Afghanistan (Balkh Province).

In Dasht-e Rabat (Kabul), a village-based seeds enterprise has been recently created by ICARDA, providing consistently better, tested seeds. In addition to bringing an income to a few farmers in the village, the process provides the rest of the farmers with a trustable source of seeds.

In many cases, farmers still plough their fields with the simplest, human-traction devices, with very low efficiency. Access to animal traction or to agricultural machines is a large improvement in the farmers’ life.

We have problems to cultivate our fields due to the lack of water. We also don’t have money to buy seeds and the last problem we deal with is that we don’t have cows to plough our fields. – Rabia, female, housewife, 48, LFDP, Sultanpur-e Sufa, Nangarhar

When they are available at all, these improvements are expensive and accessible only to the richest of households:

In terms of agriculture and livestock, people are in a very bad situation, because there is a drought and the prices of agricultural material and inputs are expensive. Our agricultural production does not recover the money we spend on inputs and land, because fertilizer is very expensive, and people who rent agricultural machines charge too much for their services. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

Credit
Access to credit to purchase inputs for production is dearly needed. Farmers can usually purchase the inputs on credit from shopkeepers, and repay this credit either in cash or in kind, but a more available, formal, regulated, form of credit would be better.

Our government has to help us by providing credit to buy things in advance, such as seeds and fertilizers. – Tahir, male, farmer, 30, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

\(^1\) Altai Consulting for the Embassy of Japan, 2005
Every year in May, the prices of livestock decrease, and we would need a loan [at that time of the year] because it is a good opportunity to buy cattle. – Hajira, female, shura member, 40, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Opium traders used to be a very commonly available credit source for a large number of the farmers interviewed in Nangarhar, which in many cases led farmers to being forced to grow poppy in order to repay the loans. But even this source has dried up in some cases:

Before, if I wanted to get a loan of 100,000 AFA [US$ 2,000], I could get it easily from poppy dealers. They knew that I was cultivating poppy and I would give the money back. But now, since I have stopped growing poppy, even if I ask for a small loan with a very high interest rate, they don’t lend me the money. They do not trust us because we are poor and we have no regular income. – Community Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

Access to Market
The Afghan agriculture is in the process of shifting from subsistence agriculture to a more market-oriented agriculture. In the mountainous parts of the country, where people have only small amounts of arable land, and in remote areas where markets to sell cash crops are too far, a major part of this land is still dedicated to wheat and vegetables for the family consumption, and the rest is dedicated to various cash crops. This situation is changing thanks to improved land productivity and better access to markets, but the latter is still very often problematic: half of the production of tomato in Nangarhar is estimated to have been spoiled in 2004, due to the lack of proper storage and transportation. The problem is also raised by farmers in Herat:

During the season we sell our fruits at a very cheap price and in a very short time because we don’t have cold storage to keep them and we can’t reach different cities in Afghanistan. Export to foreign countries is also an issue. The lack of access to market will cause [farmers] to fail. – Male, Ladder of Life, Kunjan, Herat

Farmers’ access to markets where they can sell their products is obviously dependant on the distance to the province center. Qala-e Reg (Herat) is located at about 7 km from the main road going from Herat City to the Iranian border. This position is favorable and, with the restart of trading, farmers have recently been able to increase the level of their cash crop production:

The situation is improving: in the past we could not sell our products, like figs and cumin, on the market. Five years ago, we were not able to sell one kilo of cumin. Now, even if everything is more expensive, we can sell our production in the market, from one kg to 100 kg in one day. – Abdul, male, teacher, 70, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

A similar situation is experienced by the farmers of Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan):

In the past there weren’t any buyers of raisin, but now there are. Our men go to Charikar and Qara Bagh and they know about the price of raisin. During the time of the Taliban, raisins were cheap, because Taliban blocked the ways and people could not export raisins to foreign countries. But now raisins generate a good income. – Reza Gul, female, farmer, 55, LFPD, Dash-e Rabat, Parwan

This is slightly tempered by the individual farmers’ access to markets and by their low bargaining power in front of traders. In the absence of cooperatives (or even when there is one, like in Dasht-e Rabat) the farmers sometimes have difficulties getting the most from their harvest and they have to accept the prices proposed by traders. With an increasing number of traders and competition between them, this problem is nowadays less important and concerns essentially isolated areas, or off-season productions.

This can be the case not only for agricultural goods, but also and more dramatically, for women’s products, because women cannot go to the bazaar directly and have to rely on traders to collect and sell their products.
We do tailoring, but the price we get for one dress is not very fair. We make one dress in three or four days and the price we get is around 300 AFA [US$ 6], but when it goes to market the shopkeepers sell that dress for 1,800 AFA [US$ 36]. – Khori Gul, female, tailor, 45, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Another problem lies in the competition with imported goods, particularly true for border cities, like Herat, where the market for silk is competing with imported synthetic products:

Now, agricultural goods do not have a very good market, and we have to sell our agricultural products at a very low price. For instance, when we sell silk at 100 AFA / kg instead of the 200 AFA it should sell at, if you look at all the expenses and labor used to make it, we cannot cover our expenses. – Male, Ladder of Life, Qala-e Reg, Herat

If the government bans the import of fruits and cereals from Iran, Pakistan and China, farmers can move up, because right now all kinds of fruit come from Iran and we cannot compete with them. – Sher Ahmad, male, farmer, 60, Ladder of Life, Kunjan, Herat

For fruit and vegetables, this competition with foreign countries is not only dependent on the access to market, but also on the exchange rate, as will be shown in section II.8.2.a. A large number of farmers complain that they have to sell their output at an unprofitable price.

To palliate marketing and transportation problems, a few farmers start transforming their products, but it is still done at a very low, family level, like in Kunjan (Herat), where women produce jam with figs that would otherwise be wasted in transportation. Industrial transformation facilities, when they existed in the past, have not restarted yet, hence difficulties to find a good market for certain goods.

b. Urban Households

Urban households have been visited in Dasht-e Barchi, a residential suburb of Kabul. The Dasht-e Barchi case is interesting in many ways to explain particular schemes related to the growth.

First of all, a non-negligible part of the interviewed residents in this community moved there during the past 25 to 30 years, and still own some land in their originating province (Ghazni or Parwan). They consequently gather some revenue from these properties, helping them complement their main income.

The other main livelihoods consist in small trade, shops, carpet weaving at home and unskilled labor contracted on a daily basis. A large part of the pre-war activities disappeared: spare parts for vehicles, second-hand clothes retail, metal recycling, even the carpet activity suffered a lot from the exile of its best skilled workers. The proximity with the city does not seem to bring many opportunities to the unskilled workers who constitute the large mass of the Dasht-e Barchi workers. This leads to a large unemployment rate, and to the return to the host countries of the people who recently came back from Pakistan or Iran, and could not find work in the area:

After the fall of the Taliban everyone was happy and returned to the country after losing everything during the war but they could never get back to their businesses or normal life: three-fourths of the population in this community are jobless and a lot of people went back to Iran and Pakistan because there were no work opportunities for them. Many other people are also considering it. – Awaz, male, carpet weaver, 33, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Its geographical position, at the fringe of Kabul, makes this even more difficult: some farming families with no or a little land, send their sons to the capital with the hope that they can find work there. This rural population migrating to the city finds relatively cheap rents in areas like Dasht-e Barchi as compared to the rest of Kabul. The area also attracts shopkeepers who could not afford renting shops in more central areas and had to move further out of the city. In this way, Dasht-e Barchi is an example of a suburban pauperization phenomenon common to many large cities in developing countries.
However, the new economic growth brought some new activities from which some of the household were able to benefit:

*Before, the richest and best off were involved in the spare parts business and some other people from the community also had work opportunities with them, but due to the conflicts, they lost their businesses and many people lost their jobs, but after these conflicts some new livelihoods emerged with new technologies such as computers and telecom companies. With the reconstruction of the country, there are also more jobs in NGOs. [Before the war] around 10-20 other families worked with the rich people and made a living in a way that does not exist anymore, but after the fall of the Taliban they could find work in new businesses like PCO shops, computer businesses and construction companies.* – Ghulam Reza, male, shopkeeper, 38, Conflict Timeline, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

5. Poppy

Poppy cultivation is an important source of complementary income for more than two million Afghan farmers: UNODC estimates that the average household yearly gross income from opium for poppy growing families is US$ 1,700, which translates in an income from opium only per capita of US$ 260. This is to be compared to the legal GDP per capita in Afghanistan, estimated at US$ 294 in 2005. Very often, poppy is the only or principal cash crop for the farmers who grow it.

The 2006 UNODC survey (see Table 8) shows that the main reason given by the farmers for poppy cultivation is poverty alleviation. The cultivation of poppy, however, is also known to allow the most successful farmers to purchase luxury items. This is confirmed in the visited locations:

*People can just make 5,000 to 6,000 AFA [US$ 100 to 120] per jerib when they cultivate wheat. Every family has an average of 4-5 jerib, but it is not enough to maintain a family with 5 members. When we were cultivating poppy, we could afford some luxury items like cars, or to pay for our aged sons' marriage.* – Community Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for cultivation</th>
<th># observations</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty alleviation (provision of basic food and shelter)</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High sale price of opium</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No aid received from Government or other sources</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of luxury items (e.g. vehicle, television, etc.)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater profit in relation to area of land cultivated</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External pressure (e.g. from traders or local commanders)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of water during summer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High price of food</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low prices for wheat and cotton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand among addicts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of land</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>605</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8 - Reasons for Poppy Cultivation in 2006*

Three of the visited communities cultivated poppy at some point in the last ten years, and present interesting differences.

The traditional crop of Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan) is grapevines. The destruction of irrigation structures by the Taliban (1996), followed by the situation of the village on the frontline during the conflict opposing the Taliban and the Mujahidin (1999) led to a massive exodus from the village and a large part of the grapevines was destroyed. When the villagers came back (from 2001), some of them

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1. Source: UNODC, 2005
2. Source: IMF, 2005
turned to poppy cultivation as a quick way of generating cash to rebuild their village while they waited for the grapevines to re-grow. The villagers had to stop cultivating poppy when they considered that it could prevent their village from securing foreign help. During our visit, the local institutions were still weighing this decision from a strategic point of view: “We got some help, but not as much as Helmand or Kandahar received through the Alternative Livelihoods projects. If we restart poppy cultivation now, maybe we can get more assistance.”

The situation in Nangarhar is different. This province has a long history of poppy cultivation. In Padaw Village (Bati Kot District) poppy cultivation cannot be considered a temporary coping strategy but a good opportunity to earn more money:

> Our land gives good crops because we have enough water for irrigation. For example, half a jerib of potatoes provides us a 15,000 AFA [US$ 300]. This land is also very suitable for poppy. – Mohammad, male, chief of the village, 54, Ladder of Life

The farmers of this village benefited largely from the surges in opium prices in 1992 and in 1996:

> From 1992 onwards, poppy prices were very high because some drug smugglers came to our community during these years. The best time of my life was from 1999 to 2004 because I earned a lot of money cultivating poppy. – Mullah Said Rahman, Individual Life Story

The village of Sultanpur-e Sufla (Surkh Rod District) also acknowledges a long period of cultivation and prosperity derived from poppy:

> After the defeat of the Soviets, everyone returned home and we started cultivating our land again. Because of the fighting and the migration, the local economy was very poor and people had a lot of problems to get by on agriculture alone. We had to rebuild our houses; our farms did not exist anymore. The only thing which helped our community to come out of poverty was to plant and grow poppy. It is what really led our community to prosper […] First, because poppy does not need a lot of water to grow, and second, because the income we get when we sell it is five times higher than other common crops, like wheat or barley. For example, one jerib of poppy is sold at 30.000 AFA and we get 5.000 AFA for one jerib of wheat. Prices are not comparable. We lose money when we cultivate wheat. – Community Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Like all the villages in Nangarhar, both villages eventually had to stop poppy cultivation in 2005, under the pressure of the province Governor and with promises of help from the government and the Alternative Livelihoods projects. The ban on poppy thus created new economic difficulties, probably greater for the farmers who contracted debt with opium smugglers. The key informants in both villages of Nangarhar explained that one of the best sources of credit available in the past ten years were opium traders. This opportunity has obviously disappeared.

> Karzai’s government banned poppy cultivation, which was a big blow to our economy; people lost their main economic resource. Now a lot of people are jobless, the income they get from wheat or other crops is not enough for the family. Our government did not provide us with an alternative livelihood, if the situation continues like this, we are determined to cultivate poppy again. – Community Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

It is said that the blow dealt by the enforcement of the ban on poppy cultivation was in part compensated by large opium reserves accumulated in the last years. In this case, the better off farmers would again be the ones who were able to accumulate, and were not forced to sell all their crop to pay for household events or just to decrease their level of poverty.

Unless the farmers see new opportunities brought by alternative livelihoods programs, the exhaustion of these reserves will probably command the re-start of cultivation in most parts of Nangarhar. Both villages explain that the help they received so far was not sufficient, and the fact that they did not yet restart is purely incidental:
The uluswal [chief of the district] told us that if people in other districts cultivated poppy, then we could also do so. People in Shinwar and Khogyani districts restarted, but we couldn’t [because it was already too late in the season], but next year we will also cultivate poppy again. – Padaw, Nangarhar

6. Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a very important role in two communities. In Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), the enlargement of the main road has had mixed impacts on the community. In Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), the irrigation structures play a vital role on the livelihoods of people.

6.1. Physical Infrastructure

a. Irrigation

The Afghan agriculture is essentially dependent on irrigation, with above 2.3 million hectares of irrigated land estimated in 1980. A part of irrigation structures suffered from the conflicts, essentially through a lack of proper maintenance, and a larger part was damaged by the four years of drought (2000 to 2004). As a result, it is estimated that the irrigated area has declined by 60% since 1997, largely shrinking the total surface of arable land.

The rehabilitation of these irrigation structures is an essential part of the development effort. The ANDS places the expansion of access to irrigable land as a priority scheme to stimulate economic growth through agricultural growth. The major donors already have designed and/or started the implementation of large rehabilitations of major irrigation schemes, in coordination with the government. On another level, a strong effort is placed at the community level to rehabilitate small infrastructure, often through cash-for-work programs and rural development programs.

Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan) is a particularly vivid example of these improvements. The history of this community is tightly linked to irrigation. The village was initially created when water from the Parwan intake was brought to this previously deserted land (the village name means “the Rabat Desert”). Parts of this intake (siphons) were blown up by the Taliban when they came to the area in 1996, leading a small number of families to move early from the area, and go to Pakistani Kashmir. The reconstruction of the siphon (2005) is commonly judged by the villagers as the most positive recent event for the prosperity of the community.

It is very important to us, because no living thing can survive without water. The small irrigation systems were already restored, or were not completely destroyed during the war, so when the intake was rebuilt, all our fields started being irrigated again. Of course, the grapevines did not immediately re-grow and produce but it allowed our farmers to grow other things, like wheat, maize, and poppy. Nowadays, the grapevines are growing again. It might take up to seven years to get back to the level of production we had before the war. – Community Timeline, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

The reconstruction of the main irrigation canal, as well as the capillary network at the village level (partly realized under NSP grant) thus had a quick and important effect on the village livelihoods, and is an essential factor for the long-term prosperity of the community.

b. Roads

Like irrigation structures, roads are a key factor for mobility at the village level: better roads linking villages to economic centers and markets allow for more commuting, non-farm work and the better marketing of products. Among all the visited communities, the roads were in a decent shape at least

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2 Source: Government of Afghanistan, ANDS, 2006
from the nearby district center to the province center, which is clearly not representative of the
general situation in Afghanistan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market in the village</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to district center</td>
<td>2 km</td>
<td>10 km</td>
<td>3 km</td>
<td>10 km</td>
<td>1 km</td>
<td>5 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to wholesale markets</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15 km</td>
<td>7 km</td>
<td>35 km</td>
<td>40 km</td>
<td>10 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to province center</td>
<td>30'</td>
<td>20'</td>
<td>15'</td>
<td>40'</td>
<td>60'</td>
<td>25'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-farm employment</td>
<td>~ 100%</td>
<td>~ 20%</td>
<td>~ 40%</td>
<td>~ 10%</td>
<td>~ 20%</td>
<td>~ 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 – Comparative Access to Markets

In Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), the main road going through the community was recently enlarged,
leading to an improved traffic situation, but also to the destruction / displacement of a number of
shops that were along the road. The major criticism among the interviewed villagers lies in the fact
that the road is not paved yet, thus generates abundant dust. The road also created a slight shift in
the shop ownership: some of the shop owners' houses did not extend to the limit of the new road, so
they lost their location. According to one interviewee (Community Timeline), about 30% of the
community's shops ownership shifted because of the road construction. The impact does not seem to
be exceedingly dramatic, though: the former shop owners are waiting for replacement land, and in
the meantime, the road does not provide enough activity to lead the shop rents to be exceedingly
high (about US$ 100 / month for a small shop).

On the positive side, the new road already brought a large number of improvements:

*It is a very positive event for business activity. You know what they say: “Time is gold.”
Shopkeepers very frequently lost time on the way to the city center. Thanks to this road, they
save at least half an hour to go to the bazaar: it took usually 1 hour, now it's 30 minutes; and
sometimes, when there was a lot of activity, it could even take half a day to reach the
bazaar. People also save some money on taxi: it used to cost 300 AFA, and now a fare costs
only 40 AFA.* – Community Timeline, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

In Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), the reconstruction of the main Shamali road did not seem to have a
large impact on the population, because it was already in a good enough condition to allow trade
and communication on the short distance separating the village from the main economic centers.

The transversal road, from the last to Bagram, but even more, the rehabilitation of the three
tracks leading to the village (by the villagers themselves without external help), are considered of
more important. This relatively correct network allows access to education facilities (high school
located about 7 km from the village, mostly accessed by bicycle), to health facilities, and to the
nearby cities of Charikar and Qara Bagh, as well as Kabul, in less than one hour.

The main agricultural production in Dasht-e Rabat like in large areas of the Shamali Plain, is the
kishmish, the sun-dried raisin. This raisin is sold in Charikar and Qara Bagh, on the highway going
from Kabul to the North. From there, it is usually sent to Mazar-e Sharif (Balkh Province) and, to
a lesser extent, Kabul, for processing, packaging, distribution and export. This explains the
importance of an access to this highway.

In Qala-e Reg also, the road construction was judged to have a positive impact on the local
economy:

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1. Where farmers can sell their outputs at a reasonable level.
2. All wholesale markets are located in the province center, except for Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), where there is
   also a wholesale market in Qara Bagh.
3. Interview with the chief of the village
The construction of a road has been very helpful for us. In the past people could not bring their goods to the cities. Now it is easier to bring goods to the city on time and sell them. – Ladder of Life, female, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In Nangarhar, one of the major recent events with regards to infrastructure was the reconstruction of the Kabul-Turkham Road, going through Jalalabad. For a long time, the work being done on the road disrupted communication between Jalalabad (Nangarhar’s provincial capital) and Kabul, but its re-opening was supposed to provide the farmers with a better access to Kabul market for their goods. As noted already, the poor transportation conditions along this road led to some considerable losses in 2004, and the impact of the new road is likely to be positive.

**c. Electricity**

Out of the six visited locations, two have a village electricity grid. In Herat, Qala-e Reg benefits from electricity provided by Iran, and paid for by the kWh. In Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), electricity is provided by two generators. Kunjan, in Herat, was, at the time of visit, just about to be connected.

In the last case, electricity does not change a lot the economic life of the village: it is mostly used for lighting and operating small appliances such as televisions or radios. It nevertheless allows the villagers to save some money: an electric bulb replaces a petrol lamp. It costs a villager 80 AFA / bulb / month, while the equivalent in petrol amounts to about 300 AFA. Although this is not a big saving per se, it might have some importance for the poorest. The chief of the village explains that every single household in the village has adopted this system (in villages visited on other projects, the poorest sometimes preferred not to be compelled to pay 80 AFA / month, whatever their situation).

In Qala-e Reg, the power supply allows for a more intense usage of electricity, and the village recently saw a new economic activity develop in the village: a few steel workers and welders have been able to set up workshops in the village.

*In the year 2005 (1384), the project of electricity supply from Iran to Herat Province was completed. This project is funded and implemented by the Iranian government, and provides Herat with electricity coming from Iran. This is the best project we had after the fall of Daud Khan’s government. The weather in this area is a little bit hot, so now we can have fridge and fans. Now, there is a computer training that will be started in a few days and our children can benefit from this privilege because of electricity.* – Community Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

A previous research\(^1\) in Peshawar (Pakistan) showed that a large number of families running small businesses decided not to come back to Afghanistan because of the lack of infrastructure, and particularly electricity, which would prevent them from working at night. In some other rural communities previously visited, women activities were among those who benefited the most from even a small amount of available power: the neon light bulbs allowed them to work longer during the night and to have a better vision as they continued embroidery or tailoring work.

**6.2. Social Infrastructure**

**a. Health**

The presence of health infrastructures has an impact on both the well-being of the households and their economy. As is generally the case in most of Afghanistan, access to health services in the visited locations is usually poor. In Dasht-e Barchi, people can benefit from the capital’s structures. In other areas, the strict minimum is barely available in the community itself: usually a doctor (sometimes not properly trained according to the villagers) and a general store selling drugs. The levels of hygiene and sanitation have improved, though, thanks to international aid:

*In the past, there were a lot of diseases in the community but now they have decreased because we have clean water.* – Female. Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

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\(^1\) Altai Consulting for CIPE/AWBF, Value Added Analysis of Textiles, Furniture and Jewelry, March 2006
In the past, people didn't have access to hygienic water and there were a lot of illnesses such as cholera, diarrhea, etc. We have received the help of some international organizations like UNICEF and the numbers of diseases have decreased. People need to drink clean water. – Zeba, female, housewife, 30, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Table 10 - Problems in Access to Health Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H309 Problems in access to health services</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TREATMENT TOO EXPENSIVE</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MEDICAL FACILITIES TOO FAR</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 MEDICAL FACILITIES OF POOR QUALITY</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 FACILITIES HAVE INCONVENIENT HOURS</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid cases</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This situation has a particular impact on communities living near the border: their inclination to cross the border to get proper health services is great. Even when they acknowledge that the health structures available in the provincial center have improved over the past few years, there is still a preference for foreign clinics and hospitals. A number of families then explain that they cannot access proper health services for financial reasons. On the other hand, some families, rich and poor, will spend a lot of money to access health structures in Iran or Pakistan, sometimes contracting debt to that effect.

b. Education

Access to Education

Better access to education is among one of the most commonly wished for and legitimate aspects of the development brought by the international assistance. Nearly all the interviewees at some point mentioned education as essential for personal development, and the development of the country as a whole.

One of the big changes is that now we have a school for our children. Schools were destroyed during the Taliban regime and now our school has been rebuilt by the government four years ago. Unicef has also distributed some books to the students during the past four years.

– Female, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Schools have opened in five of the six visited villages. Most of the interviewees mentioned that the quality of education is now better than ten years ago.

Access to education is nevertheless not at all well shared: in most of the cases, girls do not attend school after puberty, because of the lack of female teachers and because they can provide an income to the families:

In our community, girls stop their education very early, not only because there is no female teacher but also because they have to help their families working as tailors. Families are very poor and they need their help. – Nafas Dil, female, tailor, 40, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Boys, if they usually have a better overall access to school, also have to work in many cases, like in Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), where the poor ones need to weave carpets to help their families. In one specific case, the school is accessible only for older children, the younger being unable to walk the distance separating the village from the school:

1 Household questionnaire, question H309: “What is the most important factor that makes it difficult to obtain treatment for an illness or injury?”
The nearest school is 7 km from us, our [younger] children can go to school only once a week because it is too far. – Elder, Padaw, Nangarhar

**Importance of Education in Mobility**

The link between education and mobility is clear for all interviewees: education means better access to qualified work and more money for the household. Since they count on intergenerational solidarity, providing education to their children is, for the parents, a way to ensure a better future for themselves.

*In our community there is a person who worked as a watchman but he really worked hard to provide education for his sons. Now his sons are well educated: one is a doctor, the other is an engineer and the other one is a teacher. Now they live in the city and have a good income.* – Shrifia, female, embroider, 35, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Investment in education is a sign of confidence in the future: people usually hope that their educated children will have access to better jobs. This is debated only by teachers, who can experience the opposite situation:

*Before being elected, Karzai promised that he would give jobs according to merits and talents if he became president. But now, people with very high education are just teachers making just 3000 AFA [$60] a month, while those who are relatives or friends of Karzai have become ministers, even if they only have a medium diploma from high school.* – Abdul Ghafar, male, teacher, 50, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

With a more direct influence on adults’ economic situation, training for adults has been observed in one case, in Qala-e Reg (Herat):

*A female training and education center was opened by WFP and Habitat last year, and all the females of the community participate in this course. Women do tailoring in their houses, and the fact that both women and men can work and get an income for the family is an improvement for the community.* – Massooda Abdullah, female, teacher, 20, Ladder of Life, Qala-e Reg, Herat

7. **Assistance**

7.1. **International Assistance**

At the early stage of building a taxation system that will provide a regular income for the state, Afghanistan is largely dependent on donors’ assistance. The switch from humanitarian assistance quickly delivered in response to emergencies to a more long-term, development-oriented assistance makes possible the greater channeling of the funds through the government.

The work of various NGOs or aid agencies has been observed in all villages at various levels. The five rural villages are part of NSP, at various stages: one had implemented all its projects, two others are nearly done with it and the last two are in the community mobilization phase. Other important development work observed in the villages concerns electricity (the two villages in Herat), roads (even if interviewees do not mention the Kabul-Jalalabad road as having a primary impact, it impacts the two villages in Nangarhar to some degree, as will be described later), water sanitation, schooling, etc.

The impact of most of these projects on the movement of the communities has been analyzed in different sections of this report, but it is interesting to summarize the differences in the quantity of aid received by each.

Among the six villages, Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan) is the one that benefited the most from development projects. It largely benefited from being situated in the Shamali Plain. Indeed, after the Taliban ouster, the level of destruction in the plain, its proximity to the capital and its large economic potential naturally put the Shamali Plain in the focus of the reconstruction effort, and this village
benefited from this assistance. The aid first targeted solutions to an emergency situation: demining, preparation of shelters for the returnees, distribution of seeds, fertilizers. The development phase followed, with school building, reconstruction of irrigation structures, elaboration of new village institutions and community-based decision processes. The quantity of development projects held in this village made it difficult for the interviewers to list them comprehensively: every interview conducted in this village mentioned new aid projects not mentioned by previous interviewees.

As a consequence, the village is now well on its track to a restored livelihood. Most of the villagers acknowledge that the work done was particularly helpful, and estimate that the pre-war level of production can be attained in about five to seven years (the time taken by the grapevine to re-grow completely).

This particular situation can be compared with that of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), where the amount of assistance received is particularly limited. Dasht-e Barchi is at the fringe of the city, an urban residential neighborhood which may have been overseen by far-sighted action development projects. The socio-demographic and economic scheme of such a neighborhood makes it probably difficult for aid actors to devise a simple and effective action plan.

The two villages of Nangarhar are in a different situation: having stopped poppy cultivation, they expect that promises of development will be fulfilled (see section I.3). Both villages of Herat are relatively satisfied with the help they received until now: they gained access to electricity, built public bath-houses, and had some projects in sanitation.

Since the history of massive aid to Afghanistan is relatively recent, it is difficult to have certainty about what are the village-level factors that have an influence on how much aid a village receives and the impact of this aid on the relative livelihoods of different households among one village. Besides regional factors (geography, security, poppy, etc.), it can be thought that the personality, social network and ability of village leaders might have an influence. This question will be addressed in section IV.

7.2. Remittances and NGO Salaries

In nearly all Ladders of Life, interviewees place families who receive remittances from abroad on the top step, along with people who found employment with an NGO. Naturally, remittances taken from even a small income in Dubai or Western countries, or salaries paid by NGOs on a slightly westernized standard amount for a lot in the households’ income, when compared to common salaries.

To give a scale, a teacher in rural areas usually earns 1,800 to 2,000 AFA (US$ 36 to 40), a doctor 3,000 to 4,000 AFA (US$ 60 to 80), an engineer between 2,000 and 2,500 AFA (US$ 40 to 50). A typical Afghan NGO employee will earn, depending on his qualification, between US$ 100 and 600.

If everyone acknowledges the importance of such incomes, people who have access to them were not frequently met in the villages. The following table shows the percentage of people who regularly or occasionally receive gifts from relatives and friends in the sample. It is likely that only a small proportion of them actually receive regular remittances, as shown in the Table 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H219 receive gifts¹</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Yes</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 - People who Received Gifts from Friends and Family

¹ Household questionnaire, question H219: “Does your household regularly or occasionally receive gifts from relatives or friends?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H220 Value of items received</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,000 AFA (US$ 40)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,500 AFA (US$ 90)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 AFA (US$ 200)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000 AFA (US$ 500)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 – Value of Items Received in the Past Year

8. Demographic and Economic Factors

8.1. Demographic Factors

While there are no reliable figures available to confirm this, an important demographic growth can be observed in the country, led by the return of millions from migration and a strong birth rate. This growth was mentioned by some interviewees as an origin of the shortage on some products, and the rise in prices:

*Now, there is more population and less land so it is hard to feed our families. Everything is more expensive. When we sell our agricultural products they don’t have a good price. The government didn’t create jobs for people, and there is not enough land.* – Sher Ahmad, male, farmer, 60, Ladder of Life, Kunjan, Herat

The growth is definitely creating a long-term problem of access to land. Families often do not have enough land to sustain a large number of people, and members of the family often have to seek opportunities in the nearest city, or in Kabul.

Another problem lies in the shape of the age pyramid. It is estimated that nearly 60% of the population is currently under 18 years old. Having children in working age is considered, as will be seen extensively further in the report, the only safety strategy available to many families. When the children are not grown up yet, however, they constitute a weight that is difficult to bear.

For various reasons, all the surveyed communities have doubled their population in the last ten years. Ten years ago, the average size of these communities was between 300 (Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul) and 2500 inhabitants (Kunjan, Herat). Today, there are no communities with less than 1000 inhabitants. For the two villages of the Kabul area, the population in 1996 reflected a large migration outside the

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1 Household questionnaire, question H220: “At how much would you estimate the value of those items received over the past year?”
2 A census is currently underway. The household count has just been completed by the Central Statistical Office of Afghanistan, but the data (not released at the time of the report) does not include accurate data on the households’ composition.
3 The *CIA World Factbook* estimates the growth rate at 2.67% for 2006 (birth rate: 46.6 / 1,000).
country because of the Taliban. This factor influenced other villages in Herat and Nangarhar provinces to a lesser extent, but the growth in these provinces has to be explained essentially by the natural growth rate.

The biggest growth observed concerned Dasht-e Barchi, a suburban area of Kabul City. The proximity to the city, and the relatively low cost of rents, compared to other areas of Kabul, are likely to be attractive for villagers seeking job opportunities in the city. This still small rural exodus is somewhat compensated (as observed in Dasht-e Barchi) by a re-expatriation of some of the original inhabitants, who came back from exile, found that there was no work for them, and started leaving again to Pakistan and Iran.

8.2. Economic Factors

a. High Exchange Rate

A key policy problem hinted at by some interviewees is the current exchange rate of the Afghani (AFA). The AFA has been stabilized at a quite high level (roughly 50 AFA for one US Dollar). This is explained by inflows from drug exports, remittances, operations of foreign forces and the inflow of aid.

While it is important to keep the price of imported goods low at a time where the major part of consumption and reconstruction goods have to be imported, it is often considered to have a negative impact on the purchasing power of the households:

Ten years ago the families who were getting financial support from abroad, benefited from the low value of the Afghan currency. For example US$ 100 was a lot of money, but now it not. – Awaz, male, carpet weaver, 33, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

A similar situation is experienced by the families who benefit from the reconstruction money, paid in US Dollars. The problem becomes particularly important for farmers who experience difficulties competing with imported goods:

In the past, we were not able to sell products like tomatoes, grapes or watermelon because all the roads were closed and there were no opportunities to sell these products in the bazaar. Now, we can sell our products in the bazaar but we cannot compete with Iranian products. For example, one kg of Iranian melons costs 10 AFA, but one kg of our melons costs 20 AFA. The government should control imports. -- LFPD, female, Qala-e Reg, Herat

While the government claims to have stabilized inflation, this high exchange rate might also be an explanation in the general feeling of high prices experienced by the households.

b. High Prices

Indeed, a number of interviewees in each village mentioned the high prices of many products as a recurrent problem for them. For some, these high prices are explained by the demographic growth, leading to a high demand:

Compared to ten years ago, the markets have changed and prices have gone up due to the increase in population and in the demand for the production. Now it is harder to make a living because the prices are very high. With the government of Karzai, prices are three times higher than ten years ago. – Abdul Raouf, male, unemployed, 75, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul
The cost of living appears to be very high: house rents take the bulk of an income, while basic consumption goods are either expensive because they are produced locally or because they are imported with restrictive custom duties (essentially from Pakistan).\(^1\)

As a consequence, salaries seem to be artificially high, and it is more and more difficult for people to find employment, while the local production is difficult to sell. The high cost of living appears particularly important to the people who lived in Pakistan, where everything was felt to be far less expensive (including salaries).

c. Unemployment

Unemployment is a growing problem in Afghanistan. It is not easy to evaluate: many people in rural areas can have some partial employment to an extent that is difficult to evaluate, a large part of the economy is informal, and there is no mechanism yet to measure with any kind of accuracy the proportion of job-seekers, except counting people standing in the areas which serve as labor markets. It has nevertheless been estimated by ILO in 2004 that unemployment affects 30% of Afghans, with another 30% working part-time or in jobs for which they are over-qualified. Indeed, it is not rare to see a door-keeper with a university degree and working for an international organization.

The still low level of economic activity is one of the factors of unemployment in some sectors of activity, but many other sectors are in lack of work force. This disparity is largely due to a lack of skills and a high illiteracy rate. Another important factor lies in the large amount of refugees recently returned to the country, and the demobilization process which launched back in the labor market far larger numbers of former militia men than can integrate the national army and police. The number of job-seekers in the cities is also inflated by young men from families of rural areas who do not have enough land to employ a large number.

There are a number of initiatives taken by the donors and the government to try to palliate these different problems: the DDR\(^2\) process tried to provide ex-militia men with job opportunities, skills training centers are created, education is globally re-launched.

Among the visited villages, only Qala-e Reg (Herat) has benefited from these initiatives. A training center was opened in 2005 by WFP and Habitat, where women can learn tailoring. Besides, the recent installation of electricity in the village allowed the creation of a computer training center.

Particularly vivid in urban areas, this high unemployment rate is leading some people to go back to the country where they lived in exile during the war (Iran, Pakistan), with the hope to find better opportunities there.

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1 This is the case for a few products. For example, on May 23, 2006, Pakistan imposed an “Afghan-specific” 15% duty on sugar exports, in order to control its price on the domestic market.

2 DDR: Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration program. The reintegration phase was completed in June 2006, and the DDR process was replaced by the DIAG program (Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups).
III. How do Social Factors Affect Mobility?

1. Social Structure of the Communities

1.1. Traditional Status and Roles

Malek and Shura

In all the surveyed communities, the malek (the chief of the village, also called arbab in some locations, or wakil in urban areas) and the shura (council) of elders have an important role in the social organization of the village: they are the decision instances, often used to settle disputes and to organize activities at the community level. This particular role will be analyzed in the next section.

As the representative of the village, the malek is granted a high social status. He is appointed by the residents, sometimes to replace his father, and normally belongs to the shura, but not always. The malek interacts with the district manager and transmit the information between the district and the shura and the rest of the village. This contact with the local government gives him connections. The malek is often perceived as one of the most powerful, well-connected members of the community.

*The malek is the most powerful man in the area, he is also the richest. He is more powerful than others.* – Rabia, female, housewife, 48, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar.

*The chief of the village has political power. The chief of the village can put someone in prison and he can release him from the prison.* – Hajira, female, shura member, 40, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

The malek is usually respected by all the members of the village (male and female) and he is often considered to be among the richest in the community:

*Mr. Abdul-Qaher [the chief of the village] has money, so everyone respects him.* – LFPD, male, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

The community-based organization mentioned by all the communities is the elders’ shura. The traditional shura is usually an informal group usually composed by the elders of the village. The “elders” are generally the most respected people in the village. Since respect comes with age, but also with responsibilities, wealth and land ownership, it is not rare to see rather young “elders” participating in the shura. Traditionally, however, the shura is still composed by the real muisafid, the grey-haired people, while the youth, as well as the poor or powerless people are naturally excluded from this group.

*Only old people can participate in decision-making in the community. Young people cannot participate and their opinions are not taken seriously. Youth do not participate in decision making because they have to go to work and earn money for their family and they are always busy.* – Nafisa, female, 25, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

They are always consulted for important decisions. They gather when there is an event to discuss and to clarify, but not often in formal meetings. They not only solve community disputes (related with water, school, access to land, thefts …) but also family problems (separation, unemployment …).

*There has been a series of conflicts resulting from the shortage of water in the community. In this case, the council and the elders try to settle it. For instance, one day ago, there was a fight between two persons around the issue of water: one of them was injured. The injured is still in the hospital and the problem was settled by the council.* – Conflict Timeline, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar
The Mullah
The mullah is another key member in the rural Afghan society. There is a mullah in every community where there is a mosque. He is supposed to have studied the Qur’an but his knowledge—in rural areas—is not always very high. The mullah has several duties in a community but the most important is related to education. He is the one who teaches young men the principles of Islamic religion. The mullah is paid by the community and normally he takes part in the shura decisions.

*The chief of the village, the elders of the village and the mullah have more power because people obey what they say. The workers have less power because people don’t listen to what they have to say.* – Sangar, male, daily worker, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar.

The mosque is an important social place in every community. It is a place of worship, a place where male Muslims come together to pray and where discussion affecting the community take place.

*I think the only union or gathering in which almost all [male] people can participate are the ceremony of praying in the mosque, funerals and some other religious occasions.* – Ibrahim, male, karachiwan, 52, LFDP, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Family
The nuclear and extended family is the most important social structure in all villages.

Extended families are very common in rural areas, where several generations live together in the same house. An Afghan household has a medium size of eight to ten members and its primary function is to support its members.

In general, Afghan families are patriarchal (the father is the symbol of authority and in his absence, the elder brother) and endogamous. Marriages between cousins are very common. When a woman is married, the girl moves to her husband’s place to live and start a new life.

Weddings are some of the most vital moments for an Afghan family. In almost every individual life story, one of the best moments in interviewees’ lives was when they got married:

*One of the best moments in my life was when I got married. It was a very good moment because my parents were still alive. I was psychologically at my best.* – Haqil Meer, ILS, Chronic Rich, Padaw, Nangarhar.

A wedding can be an expensive event: often, men have to pay the father in law for his daughter (toyana in Dari) and the groom can consequently be indebted for several years. The sum required depends on the wealth of the family, but can amount to US$ 3,000 to US$ 6,000. The poorest families, however, do not necessarily follow this principle. An example was given in Padaw (Nangarhar) where the walwar was not required by some households. The malek suggested that their cultural proximity to Pakistan has changed this tradition.

Movers and rich households are proud to pay the dowry without needing to become indebted. This is a symbol of wealth and prosperity:

*In 2003, I helped two of my sons get married and I paid for their wedding party. This event made me very happy because both of them started a new life.* – Mullah Said Rahman, ILS, mover, Padaw, Nangarhar

Qawm
Above the family lays a larger social structure that can be defined by the village boundaries or extend outside them. The qawm is a flexible definition of identity. For some, it can express belonging to a

1 Afghan women can never go to the mosque.
2 Karachiwan: a person owning a karachi, a hand cart used as a shop.
geographic area; for others, it conveys more a notion of tribe or nationality; for some, it is determined by kinship and belonging to a specific branch of a tribe.

Thus, the qawm is the most common way of describing a homogenous social group, providing its members with a form of social cohesion, protection and cooperation. Naturally, the qawm both regroups and creates differences, which can lead to exclusion, but this was not observed in the visited communities.

1.2. Socio-Economic Stratification (Ladder of Life)

A different, parallel categorization emerges from the Ladder of Life interviews. In all interviews but one, the interviewees conferred more importance, in their definitions of the ladder of life steps, to economic values rather than to social values. In the exception that in Dasht-e Rabat (male Ladder of Life), steps are dedicated to teachers, Mamurs (clerks) and Ajirs (low level employees).

In the other ladders of life, people usually segment the households according to the following principles:

On average, three categories are described to be below the community-perceived poverty line where villagers no longer consider households poor.

- People who are dependent on the help of the community (widows, unemployed, disabled, beggars);
- People who have temporary work, no capital and have difficulties sustaining their life;
- People who have a small capital or a slightly more regular work, but are still not able to save money.

Above the community-perceived poverty line, the classification varies more, but usually regroups two to three main categories:

- People who have a reasonable amount of working capital (a shop, a few jeribs of land); they often constitute the middle-class, the category mostly represented in the community. They have just slightly more than enough;
- People who have more capital (businessmen instead of shopkeepers, landowners instead of farmers), or a better education and a qualified job with a good income, or have multiple activities;
- People who have a lot of land, work for an NGO, or receive remittances from abroad.

The malek, the elders and the mullah, who have a traditional social status, are never mentioned as the best off in the ladder of life for this status.

2. Social Structure and Mobility

2.1. Social Mobility across Traditional Categories

Compared to other countries, Afghan society seen at the village level is not particularly stratified. Nevertheless, phenomena like social reproduction, separation of social groups, and accumulation of roles are visible in the communities. It is not by surviving for a longer time than the others that one becomes a recognized elder; if the maleks usually need the communities’ approval, they are rarely elected, and they often inherit their function from their fathers; when possible, a retiring mullah will appoint his successor; the shura chooses its own members; inbreeding tends to keep people in the same qawm if not in the same extended family.

Although it does often occur naturally, social movement is not impossible: the communities insist at length on the link between wealth, power and social status. In the visited communities, it is clear that social distinctions are granted to people who succeed in their life. Someone gifted with a large family and who could raise it successfully will gain the respect of other villagers. Someone who succeeds in his business and can accumulate important wealth will be admired by the other villagers and consulted when they have problems. These successful men can be granted the name of Khan,
expressing their success and power. Education is also nowadays a way to access community responsibilities.

Therefore, it seems that movement on the traditional ladder of the village is more a symptom than a factor of movement on the socio-economic ladder.

2.2. Social Factors of Mobility

a. Household Level

Close Family

As mentioned earlier, a large family is often the best available way to increase income possibilities. This works better when the family has male members in age of working. This scheme is also used to extend the period in which the household, considered as a whole, can be at work, and the inclusion of the household of the aged parents is the only way for them to survive when they have stopped working.

*My two sons were grown up and could work with their father, so our economic condition was getting better with time.* – Ghulam Mohammad’s wife, ILS, mover, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Extended Family and Qawm

The qawm or the extended family is also traditionally used as a safety net and as a way to move up when the social network works well\(^1\): qawm members can sometimes provide housing or work to seasonal migrants who come to the cities. Nepotism, often criticized by the interviewees, is used whenever possible. The importance of the qawm is clearly observed during periods of crisis. People recovered better if someone from their family or community was abroad. A proverb in Sultanpur-e Sufla (Nangarhar) reflects well the importance of the qawmi links.

*“Nareena laka ghroona dee, hagha kooranai chai zhiad nariena lary ziad zoor laree”. Men are like a mountain, families who have more mountains are more powerful.* – LFPD, Male, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Personal relations and connections help a household and an individual to survive and sometimes to move up: relatives are the first source of credit for the interviewed households. This preference over the moneylenders is natural when the other sources or credit are rare and expensive. When there is an economic problem, relatives and friends do not hesitate to provide a credit when they can.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H223 Who provided the credit or loan(^2)</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1 RELATIVES</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 MONEYLENDER</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 TRADER/STORE</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 LANDLORD</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 COMMUNITY CREDIT GROUP/ASSO</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 COMMERCIAL BANK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 GOVERNMENT BANK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 NGO</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1 N/A</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 13 - Sources of Credit in the Past Ten Years*


\(^2\) Household questionnaire, question H223: “If in the past year anyone in this household borrowed or obtained credit for regular consumption purposes, who provided it?”
Reciprocally, the extended family can sometimes be a burden on the household economy when the household has to accommodate guests for an extended period of time. When asked to discuss the relative position of the community-perceived poverty line for being out of poverty and a monthly income of 6,000 AFA for a family of seven, the interviewees in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan) explained that:

*In my opinion, I think 6,000 Afghani’s for a 7 person house is satisfying. Even if this amount is not much, if someone does not have many guests in his house, with this amount he can maintain his house.* – Miro Gul, female, farmer, 38, Ladder of Life

**Membership in Social or Economic Groups**

Among the surveyed villages, the heads of households belonged on average to the 0.2 group at the time of the interview, and 0.1 ten years ago. This might be due to the sample but the civil society has had little time to reconstitute, and it seems that country is not yet excessively dense in groups and associations. The social structure is still largely turned towards the family.  

*There is no organization in the community. We have suffered a lot and people were discouraged to create or establish new organizations. Now it is easier to create a party as the new constitution makes it easier.* – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

The only group of importance mentioned in the visited villages was the agricultural cooperative of Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan). It gathers a large part of the village’s grape farmers, but with no real efficiency. It cannot really explain any kind of movement of individual households or at the village level at this stage, but might prove useful in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member of Groups Now</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 14 – Membership in Associations*

**Education**

As seen earlier, education is considered by all as an important asset, easily confirmed by the lack of skilled or learned resources in the country. People with a better education are not only considered as the best off in the communities, but are also the most respected.

**2.3. Community Level**

Sometimes linked to the qawm, the social cohesion at the village level is considered as both a symptom and a source of well-being. After years of conflict opposing political or ethnic groups, social unity is longed for by the communities. Unity in the village helps to face major or minor shocks.

When the Taliban imprisoned a hundred of the male villagers of Dasht-e Rabat and evacuated the rest of the village to Jalalabad, the families decided to escape together and settle in Pakistani Kashmir, where they survived together until the end of the conflict, taking care of each other when the men were absent. This village suffered greatly from a conflict partly based on ethnic differences. They attribute their most important problems to Pashtun Taliban, but the malek is proud to mention that there are Pashtuns currently living in the village, like before the Taliban, and that it does not create any resentment. He explains that he takes great care in making sure that Pashtun families benefit from at least as many opportunities as the Tajiks.

Hindus settled many centuries ago in Afghanistan and constitute a small minority in eastern and southern provinces. In Sultanpur-e Sufia (Nangarhar), their presence was recognized and

---

1 Household questionnaire, questions H401 to H406: “To how many groups, network or associations do you belong, now”.
appreciated. This group lived in the village for a long time and Muslim and Hindu villagers shared traditions and festivities. Most of the Hindus were merchants, traders and moneylenders. All left the community at the time of the Taliban and the drought.

Before the struggle against Russians started, this community was a community of 2000 people with around 30 percent Hindus. Hindus had houses, land, a place for their religious practices and a place for burning their dead bodies. They attended our ceremonies like Muslim villagers did and we attended theirs. People were living in a very good and happy environment; there were lots of fruit trees in this area and people used to come for sightseeing. – Case Study, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar.

A cohesive community tends to be more equal:

There is no social inequality where we live. All people live in the same conditions. Since people stopped fighting, they feel united. – LFPD, men, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

Social cohesion can sometimes help a household move up or simply survive:

From 1998 to 2002, and even worse in 2004, we had very difficult winters. The families could not afford to heat their houses – they had to regroup several families in a small room to survive. Community profile, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

This translates into a willingness to help if a problem arises, acknowledged by a vast majority of the interviewees – although more in rural areas than in the urban neighborhood of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul). Social circles in the city, particularly in poor, dense areas that are prone to attract new residents, might be less cohesive, as some indicators in Dasht-e Barchi lead to think.

The willingness to help others seems to lead to a small extent to actual community mobilization over common problems. Traditionally, the community as a whole takes care of the maintenance of its infrastructures. This system, weakened by the conflict, is being restarted nowadays, often with the help of the international aid. The pertinence of sponsoring activities traditionally taken care of by the community is debated. However, assistance projects that include villager involvement (for example, NSP requires at least a 10% participation of the village in the project) play a role in counter-balancing this disruption.

### Table 15 – Solidarity and Support for Resolving Community Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 AGREE STRONGLY</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 AGREE SOMEWHAT</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 DISAGREE SOMEWHAT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 DISAGREE STRONGLY</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cases: 15 15 15 13 14 15 14 86

### Table 16 – Participation in Community Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average # Times</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Household questionnaire, question H414A: “In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Most people in this village/neighborhood are willing to help if you need it.”

2 Household questionnaire, question H416: “In the past year, how many times did you or anyone in your household participate in any community activities, in which people came together to do some work for the benefit of the village/neighborhood?”
IV. How do Political Factors affect Mobility?

1. Background

1.1. Political Structure

Answers in the survey about politics, democracy and governance are tightly intertwined with conflict
issues. It is hard to differentiate the role of political factors on mobility from that of the conflict
factors.

The changes of regimes since 1978 came with drastic changes in the political structure at all levels.
Before 2004, the last time that most people had participated in elections was 1979 (district level),
which is to say that many of the interviewees experienced democracy for the first time very recently.

Two major national elections happened recently: in October 2004, Afghans elected their president,
and in September 2005, their representatives to the two Houses of the Parliament and the provincial
councils.

At the village level, no formal elections were organized recently. The traditional representatives or
leading instances of a community are, depending on the area:
- The wakil, mostly in urban areas, is usually appointed by the government when he is wakil at the
  neighborhood level, and by the residents when he works at a lower level (a few streets);
- The malek, or arbab, for rural areas, the chief of the village, usually appointed by the residents
  and approved by the government;
- In irrigated areas, the mirab is the water-supply manager. He usually belongs to a council of
  mirab at the basin or main canal level;
- The shura, or council, usually consisting of elders, self-appointed or appointed by the residents,
  often gathered ad hoc to solve a specific problem;
- The elders on an individual basis. Elders are not always aged (a 35 years-old interviewee
  explained that he was now a muisafid or grey-haired, one of the terms used for “elder” in Dari),
  but are usually the most respected persons in the community. They usually, but not always,
  include the mullah of the village;
- The commander title can encompass anyone from the warlord commanding an important army to
  a village commander in control of a small group of armed people. Commanders had a large
  influence during the conflicts and are now in the process of being disarmed. Still, a number of
  former militia or army commanders keep their name and status in the civil world. The commander
  title nowadays means an important, powerful person, who has military power or not.

Wakil or malek usually interact with the highest level of representation, the district manager. This is
particularly true in cities, where wakil have a role of information gathering: wakil at the block level
collect information and transmit it to the wakil at the neighborhood level, who in turn transmit reports
to the district officers. In rural areas, malek and shura can coexist, along with individual elders taking
part in conflict resolution, moral guidance, etc. Shura are often constituted for specific purposes, and
and can include a varying number of members. Often, specific shura are gathered to solve water as well
as agricultural issues.

In addition, some of the communities experienced elections of NSP community development councils
(see below). These elections have no real legal status, but for many villages, they are the closest
villagers have gotten to local elections.

Note on the Collected Data:

With this wealth of semi-official, semi-purposive structures, the questions concerning the lowest level
of government were understood differently by the villagers. When it came to decision making, the
lowest level of government usually referred to the district level, but sometimes it referred to the
village shura, when this was elected and powerful. For the questions about political leaders, the
interviewees chose often to talk about the emerging political class in general, often seen through the
newly elected Parliament members. This will be reflected in the following analysis.
1.2. Past and Present Conditions

Overall, the settlement of the Afghan political problems is judged by all interviewees to have had a major, positive impact on their possibility for movement, if not yet on their movement. Numerous examples are given in the different communities: in Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), the focus group presents a broad picture:

After the instauration of the new government of Karzai, the security got much better and Afghanistan was internationally recognized. The coalition forces including the US Army took important role in the peace keeping process. – LFDP, men, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Compared to the past ten years, the situation is better now because, in that time, everyone was king and leader, so no one could stop them. – Latifa, female, housewife, 30, LFDP, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Peace leads to security, which is a necessity for reconstruction at the national, village and individual level.

Now that we have an elected national government, people are free of the previous regimes and their oppressions and destruction. We have security. People can do what they want. Now, there are economic and social activities. War is over. – Haji Kazam Ali, male, elder, 70, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

2. National and District Level

While in principle democracy is acknowledged as a positive factor for the country, in general, the level of confidence expressed by the interviewees in the local or the national government is not extremely high. This is explained by several factors: a usually low level of interaction between villagers and government officials, a relatively recent existence of official government structures, the low quantity of actual decisions taken and acted upon by the government officials and a high level of corruption seen in government workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H415R1A Trust Local government officials¹</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TO A VERY GREAT EXTENT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 TO A GREAT EXTENT</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 NEITHER GREAT NOR SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 TO A SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 - Level of Trust in the Local Government, Now

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H415R2A Trust State/Central government officials²</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TO A VERY GREAT EXTENT</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 TO A GREAT EXTENT</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 NEITHER GREAT NOR SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 TO A SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 - Level of Trust in the Central Government, Now

The local government seems easy to reach for the people who live near the district center:

¹ Household questionnaire, question H415R1A: “How much do you trust... now?”
² Household questionnaire, question H415R2A: “How much do you trust... now?”
Ten years ago there was no local government. Only a commander was able to speak. Now there is an elected local government that represents people and that people can contact easily. – Female, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Before, we had no contact with the district government, but now, when we face any problem, we can easily go to the District and meet the Uluswal [the district manager]. – LFDP, men, Dash-e Rabat, Kabul

This does not mean that the district government does anything for the village. The districts have a limited margin of action in the rural areas, and people of Padaw (Nangarhar) resent the fact that they do not assume their past role anymore, like in agriculture or security:

The local government does not help us at all. It takes taxes for us but then, it does not provide us with seeds or fertilizer. We don’t have any contact with it and we don’t trust it. – Raz, male, jobless, 35, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

The government should take appropriate actions to facilitate business opportunities. They can, for example, instruct their security officials better. We asked several times the government to assist us but they have not done anything until now. – Sarwara, female, 54, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

In Qala-e Reg (Herat) and Padaw (Nangarhar), interaction with the local government is considered possible only for the powerful people:

People can not express their problems or present their requests to the district governor freely. If you have power, you can complain. If you don’t have power, you will be disgraced by the governor. – LFPD, male, Qala-e Reg, Herat

The district government is not accessible to the general public: only commanders can contact them because they are still in power. The local council of elders can hardly ever see the local government. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

All interviewees acknowledged to some, usually high, degree inefficiency, corruption and nepotism within the government:

There was a Jihadi commander who was our district Governor here, but as a result of our complaints he is not working here anymore. The problem is that the new one is illiterate and it is going to be difficult for them to change things for the better. Selections of leaders are the result of nepotism. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

A land dispute [occurred] between two persons in the village last year [2005]. One man involved was rich and paid a bribe to the police to support him. Elders went to higher authorities and complained about the police. All the people in the village supported the poor person. – Conflict Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H512 Bribe taking¹</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Av.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 ALMOST NO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A FEW GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 MOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ALMOST ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 - Government Officials involved in Corruption

¹ Household questionnaire, question H512: “How widespread do you think bribe taking and corruption are in this country? How many government officials/civil servants are engaged in it?”
Correlated with this, the local government is, except in Herat, thought to be mostly run by a few big interests:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H506</th>
<th>Local government run by</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Av.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RUN FOR ALL THE PEOPLE</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>RUN BY A FEW BIG INTERESTS</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 20 - Who runs the Local Government**

3. *Comparative Impact of Local Structures*

The following table shows a number of variables used to describe and compare the different situations in the community. It is to be noted that:

- As usual, most villages have multiple decision structures. NSP is indicated when the NSP shura has the leading role, or the malek is also the head of the NSP shura;
- “Leaders approval” shows issues between people and the local leaders that were encountered during the visits;
- “Local governance” shows the community’s leading structure’s capacity to enforce decisions;
- The “relationship with GoA” shows the level of proximity of the leading structure to the district authorities;
- “Impact on livelihood” shows the capacity of the leading structure to bring changes to the community livelihoods, e.g. in bringing development projects to the village (positive), or in enforcing the ban on poppy (considered to be negative by the villagers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village ID</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Prov</th>
<th>Leading structure</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>NSP</th>
<th>Other institution</th>
<th>Other institution</th>
<th>Reconstruction projects</th>
<th>Voice &amp; Participation</th>
<th>Improving</th>
<th>Women participation</th>
<th>Leaders approval**</th>
<th>Local governance**</th>
<th>Relationship with GoA**</th>
<th>Impact on livelihood**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>heart</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wakil</td>
<td>NSP</td>
<td>Malek</td>
<td>Malek</td>
<td>NSP</td>
<td>Arbab</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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* Recently started ** of the leading structure **negative (poppy)

**Table 21 - Indicators related to Democracy and Local Governance**

These indicators give insights on the level of impact of the structure types on the local livelihoods at the village level.

For example, the traditional local structures are not extremely consultative. The decisions are often taken by a self-appointed council, or by the recognized malek, without village consultation:

*Most people do not participate in decision making. Only a limited number of people like the chief of the community and the elders of the village play important roles in decision making.*

- Mohammad Hussain, male, karachiwan, 62, LFPD

Villagers, however, feel that they are represented. The leaders of the communities usually have frequent interactions with the district authorities. Even in Sultanpur-e Sufla, where these links seem among the lowest of the visited communities:
There was no council and no election 10 years ago. Now our local government does not take any decision without the approval of the community council. – Zabiullah, male, laborer, 25, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sula, Nangarhar

The interaction with the district authorities, as well as the capacity of these structures to enforce decisions at the village level should usually come with a larger impact on livelihoods but it is not always the case. The capacity of the local representative to bring development to the village also depends on his capacity to transform these connections into objective improvement and to bring together the villagers.

If nearly all the villagers declare that they would get together if there was an opportunity to solve a village issue, the number of times it was actually done varies a lot between the different villages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H417 People would cooperate</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 VERY LIKELY</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SOMEWHAT LIKELY</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22 - Potential Degree of Cooperation between People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H416 Participation in community activities</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average # Times</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 - Actual Participation in Community Activities in the Past Year

In some of the cases, though, it is felt by the interviewees that they do not have a large margin of freedom in their action, nor a lot of power. In Padaw, while the malek is known to have a strong network (he was selected to represent the district in a meeting with President Karzai) and would be able to positively help the village, his global impact on the livelihoods of the people is negative: he enforced the ban on poppy cultivation but failed to bring new opportunities or development projects to the village. This is part of the reason why his position is disputed and some of the villagers asked that he should be replaced by an elected leader. As a matter of fact, the malek refused this process:

Several members of the community - aged between thirty and forty - started opposing my leadership and they claimed to be the leaders. I invited them for an unofficial process of elections but they asked for ballot boxes, which is not possible because a shura is not a presidential election. – Malek, Case Study, Padaw, Nangarhar

In three of the observed cases, the community institutions seem to be at least partly responsible for notable improvements in the village. In Qala-e Reg (Herat), the malek maintained a good relationship with a former resident of the village who has accessed a position of power:

Mohammed Nasir is a member of Welayati Shura [the newly elected provincial council]. He is from our community and is now living in Kabul but he helps the community to get electricity and water. – Khan Bibi, female, housewife, 60, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), the malek, who is also the head of the agricultural cooperative, proved particularly aware of what needs to be done in order to cleverly secure more help for his community: during our interview, he asked us if we could mention the community’s name to a particular person working for the French agricultural cooperation in this area, and helping agricultural cooperatives,

1 Household questionnaire, question H417: “If there was a problem with getting enough water in this village/neighborhood, how likely is it that people would cooperate to try to solve the problem?”
2 Household questionnaire, question H416: “In the past year, how many times did you or anyone in your household participate in any community activities, in which people came together to do some work for the benefit of the village/neighborhood?”
which shows a high level of awareness and realism in this kind of processes. These three areas are locations where NSP was implemented.

3.1. Role of NSP

The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is a rural development program initiated by the World Bank, and managed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). The program provides grants (of up to US$ 60,000) to villages for rehabilitation, reconstruction, and income generation projects. In order to benefit from these grants, the communities have to undergo a specific process: democratic elections of a community development council; definition of a list of projects, prioritization of this list; design of a proposal for the top priority projects; approval of this proposal by the MRRD; procurement of the necessary materials and construction of the project.

The aim of the program is not only to provide reconstruction or development aid to the villages, but also to create new village institutions or give legitimacy to existing ones. NSP is at work in the five rural communities, but has only recently started in the visited communities of Nangarhar. In the three other cases (Parwan and Herat), the role of the NSP shura is either central – and this council can be considered as the leading instance of the community (Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan, and Qala-e Reg, Herat) – or has a growing importance at the side of the traditional leader (Kunjan, Herat). In all significant cases, the NSP shura extended its role on grounds usually reserved by the traditional leaders:

*During the Mujahidin time, before the Taliban, disputes were solved by religious scholars and elders. During the Taliban there was no one in this village and this place was a battlefield. After the Taliban, a new thing happened: NSP came here and people elected a village council. Problems are now solved through this village council.* – Conflict Timeline, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

*Ten years ago, disputes were resolved by the elders of the qawm but now a council has been formed through elections and they resolve disputes.* – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Nangarhar

The relative weakness of the NSP shura in Nangarhar can be explained by the fact that no project had yet been implemented at the time of visit.

3.2. Rule of Law and Illegal Activities

In the absence of security and rule of law, economic activities are fewer for the large mass but some cases have been observed in the visited villages, where people actually benefited from the unstable situation. In Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), the villagers found a source of income in smuggling weapons during the Mujahidin conflicts; this source disappeared with the peace situation.

Poppy cultivation is a better activity in times of relative absence of rule of law. Farmers of Nangarhar lost a large proportion of their income when the Karzai government decided the ban on poppy:

*Karzai’s government banned poppy cultivation, which was a big blow to our economy; people lost their main economic resource. Now a lot of people are jobless and the income they get from wheat or other crops is not enough for the family.* – Community Timeline, Padaw, Nangarhar

Some of the farmers, however, managed to convert to new activities since the ban. In many cases, poppy cultivating farmers grew accustomed to a better life than their parents, had needs for a larger income and had sometimes accumulated enough capital to start a new, legal activity that could provide them with this income:

*I have my own shop in Jalalabad where I sell clothes. I have decided to change my occupation because the government banished us from cultivating poppy and growing wheat was not enough.* – Mullah Said Rahman, ILS, Bati Kot, Nangarhar
In Herat, another illegal activity that was made possible by weak government institutions is smuggling people across the Iranian border. This activity is getting more and more difficult, and some of the “agents” had to find other, more legal activities:

For example, in our community there is an agent: his name is Hassamuddin. He was in step 5 or 6 but he got arrested three times and each time he had 25 passengers so about 75 passengers were arrested and he faced a big loss. He sold all the things he had, like his land, his house, even his carpets. He fell down to step 2. But one year later, he managed to establish himself again: he leased a plastic factory from someone and then he bought it. He succeeded because he is very sharp, hard working and he has very good relationships with people so they trust him and helped with this factory. – Zarin Gul, female, tailor, 25, Ladder of Life, Qala-e Reg, Herat

As shown here, illegal activities depend on the level of enforcement of the rule of law but their impact on the livelihoods of the people who benefit from them is linked to other factors: small farmers benefit far less from the opium economy than smugglers who have larger networks, and former commanders turned into drug lords. The latter can turn to other activities when they have accumulated enough capital, which was made possible by a stronger initial situation. Nowadays, social networks are also essential to escape penalties, when someone is caught.
V. How Does Gender Affect Mobility?

1. History and First Reforms

Several attempts to improve women’s education have been led by various leaders along Afghanistan’s history, the first usually cited attempt being King Amanullah Khan’s inauguration of the first primary school for girls in 1921 and his efforts to promote female education in the country during this rule. Many of his reforms, however, were abandoned soon after he lost power.

In 1959, the Prime Minister Daud Khan supported the removal of the veil and he tried to abolish the practice of excluding women from public view.

In the late seventies, the communist party (PDPA) encouraged adult education and abolished the “bride-price” but after the fall of the communist regime, the Mujahidin officially reestablished the mandatory wearing of chadri. During the Taliban, women were deprived of most of their rights. The Taliban banned women’s education and employment and women were forbidden to go outside without a mahram, a male companion.

After the restoration of the democracy, the constitution promulgated in 2003 provides equal rights for men and women: “any kind of discrimination and privilege among the citizens of Afghanistan is prohibited” (art. 22), “all the citizens of Afghanistan have equal rights and duties before the law” (art. 23). The prevalent Afghan traditions and culture segregating women are nonetheless still most commonly applied throughout the country. The situation of women in Afghanistan is still very harsh. Data shows that female life expectancy does not exceed 45 years, and the maternal mortality ratio is 1,600 deaths per 100,000 live births, one of the highest in the world.

Significant differences between communities have not been observed, with the exception of those in Herat, where women were more active and aware of their rights, but one must note that in 2005, 75 women immolated themselves in this province.

2. Women’s Economic Roles

2.1. Space and Movement

The specific roles of women and men are very clearly distinguished in Afghan society. Women are considered to represent the honor of the family and their behavior is carefully observed. Public and private spaces are also very well defined. Private spaces (the house) belong to women and public spaces (street, bazaar, shops ...) belong to men. Even inside the house, when a party or ceremony takes place, the house is divided. Men and women do not eat, socialize, or talk together.

In all the surveyed communities, interviewees agreed on the differences in the levels of freedom granted to women and men. Restricting the movement of women to the house is, for the men, a necessary evil, a way to protect their security.

Women have freedom inside the house and men have the same freedom outside the house.

Women can not go outside the house due to security reasons. – Alisha, male, 25, Youth, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

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1 He also increased the legal age of marriage for women to 18 years, and 21 years for men.
2 Afghanistan introduced free and compulsory primary schooling in 1935. The Constitution of 1964, drawn up by King Zahir Shah, guaranteed free and compulsory education for all. In 1980, 89% of Afghans had completed first level. By 1999, 69.5% of Afghans (including 85% of women) were illiterate. Source: Education for All Report: Afghanistan, UNICEF, 1999.
Men are free outside the home and women are free inside the house. According to the Islamic rules of our society, men are freer. It is our tradition and our culture. – LFPD, male, Padaw, Nangarhar

Adult women acknowledge this inequality and they perceive this lack of movement as quite normal and common. On the contrary, younger females feel that freedom of movement is one of the most important rights:

In our society, girls have the least freedom because we cannot go to school, we cannot take decisions about our lives and future. We cannot go anywhere without a mahram (father, brother, uncle). – Fatima, female, 18, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Men have more freedom than women because women have to respect the tradition and culture of the community. For example, our brothers can go to the city to enjoy themselves but we cannot go. Our brothers can go for a walk every morning and every night but we cannot go. – Atifa, female, 18, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In all the surveyed communities, the traditional role for a woman is to be a sister, a wife and a mother. Women are usually married soon after their puberty and they have an average of five children and several miscarriages during their life. In Pashtun areas, like in Padaw and Sultanpur-e Sulfa (Nangarhar), women are more strictly confined and their social networks are close to inexistent. In Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), Hazara women could not complete the sorting exercise of the ladder of life: out of 95 surrounding households of their neighborhood, composed of about 10 small streets, they knew only a few - while men picked randomly in the street knew them perfectly.

Some women in both villages of Nangarhar confessed not to be able to visit their sisters because their husbands forbid them to go out. The same situation happens in Kabul:

Women and particularly girls can not go to each other's houses. For two years I could not go and visit the neighbors next door. – Fatima, female, housewife, 50, LFPD

2.2. Activities

Nonetheless, women in the visited villages do have economic activities. In Dasht-e Rabat, a large part of the households’ income is provided by carpet weaving activities executed by women (and often children). In rural areas, women traditionally take care of the livestock. In some cases (Parwan, Herat), they work in the fields as well. In Qala-e Reg (Herat), they specialize in silk production. In Kunjan, they transform fruits into jam sold on the market. In all cases, they have home activities such as embroidery or tailoring, traditionally destined to the household, but nowadays more frequently done with a commercial aim.

Women can then provide a substantial source of income to the household. When interviewed, women who do have such activities present themselves as carpet weavers, farmers, or tailors. Curiously, in the household questionnaire where the different members of the households providing an income to the family are listed, heads of families mention female members only in 15% of the sample.

2.3. Vulnerabilities

The lack of mobility imposed by tradition hinders women’s autonomy in these activities. They depend on their husbands to have information that primarily comes from the bazaar. Even in communities near the city women never go alone to the market. They often depend on traders coming to their village to sell their products on the bazaar.

Men have more freedom than women because in our community women cannot go to the bazaar; they cannot take any decision and they cannot get education but men can go out of this province alone, they can complete their education and they can take any kind of decision about their future. – Basri Gul, female, 17, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar
Widows are one the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan. The conflict left many women without husbands. They are perceived as the worst off in every Ladder of Life, together with the jobless. Their families try to remarry them quickly, normally with a relative of their husbands.

*In 1985, I got married again, to my husband's brother, a peasant too, but our economic situation was still bad (-2).* - Ghulam Mohammad's wife, ILS, mover, Dasht-e Barchi

*When I was young and my husband was alive, our economic situation was good. We did not have any land or savings but we had enough to eat and our life was going well. When my husband died, our situation was very bad, with a lot of economic problems because my children were small. I couldn't work and I had to wait until my sons were able to work.* - Hassan Bibi, ILS, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Female-headed households where the husband is away for an extended period of time are also very vulnerable. In many cases, their husband never comes back but nobody can recognize that he is dead. We have an example in Qala-e Reg where a woman has been waiting for her husband for several years. He disappeared in Iran and she does not know if he is alive or not.

When women work for a compensation, their salaries are usually half those of men. In Sultanpur-e Sufla (Nangarhar), the average daily wage for an unskilled female worker was said to be 50 AFA / day (US$ 1), and 125 AFA (US$ 2.5) for a man. In Qala-e Reg (Herat), the difference is even larger: 20 AFA / day for a woman, 140 AFA / day for a man. Only in Kunjan, a community located seven kilometers from Herat City, the provincial capital, an unskilled male worker earns 150 AFA a day and a woman 100 AFA a day.

Women’s work is always considered a complementary activity. In the wealthiest rural families, women normally do not work in the fields. Women who work are a symptom of the poverty of the family:

*Our economic situation is good, so I don't need to work. My father had a nice job as a farmer and my husband is also cultivating the land and working in a school. We have given a good education to all of our sons.* - Sediqa, ILS, mover, Qala-e Reg, Herat

*Poor people always give their women permission to work because they need money. Rich people never give the permission.* - Shirin Gul, female, CRS worker, 47, LFPD, Kunjan, Herat

On the other hand, for an educated woman, it is more acceptable to have a job and a salary and to be respected by the community:

*In 2003, my wife and I found a job in UN-Habitat and our economic [situation got better]. Since, we both work, we have a good income now and our economic condition is very good.* - Abdul Hadi, ILS, Qala-e Reg, Herat

### 3. Young Women and Education

If 40% of girls enroll in primary school (for 67% of boys), the enrollment in secondary school is very low: only 10% of the girls\(^1\). Most of the young women in rural areas finish their education when they reach puberty, at the age of twelve, or even before. This situation is created by the absence of female teachers, the necessary protection of maidens, but also by the small income they can provide to the family.

*In our community, girls stopped their education very early, not only because there is no female teacher but also because they have to help their families working as tailors. Families are very poor and they need their help.* - Nafas Dil, female, tailor, 40, Ladder of Life, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

\(^1\)Idem
In the case of young girls, the families prefer an immediately available income, however small, to a hypothetic larger income if the girls complete their education.

*We can only study until 6th or 7th grade and it is not enough. Boys can complete their studies here or outside of this province. Our men can go everywhere without their parents’ permission but women can not go anywhere alone.* – Nafas Dil, female, housewife, 53, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufa, Nangarhar

*Men have the freedom to study up to the Masters degree if they want. But few women are allowed to continue their study up to 12th grade. Our tradition and culture do not allow them to do so.*- Tahir, male, farmer, 30, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

Girls are then quickly married and they start having children very soon. In one community only, Qala-e Reg (Herat), young women continued to study until the age of eighteen. None of them were married and all of them wanted to access professions that required advanced studies, such as doctors, teachers and journalists. In the rest of the communities, women share their worries about the lack of choice:

*Women and girls can not take decisions about their marriage without their parents’ consent, but men can get married with whom they want.* – Youth, females, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

*Men are privileged, they can marry whenever they want and study more. Women here never decide when they are going to get married.* – Nawrozi, female, 30, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

Young women in Qala-e Reg (Herat), were also very concerned about the importance of religion and its misuses:

*Our people are always talking about Islam, but they don’t know anything about what real Islam says about education and women. They do not know that Islam said that education is very necessary and an important thing for men and women. Women should take part in business, jobs, politics ... Islam give us these rights but our people and our parents do not give us these rights.* – Youth, female, Qala-e- Reg, Herat

If adult females accept their situation with dignity, they are also very concerned about the importance of giving an education to their sons and daughters, but they never suggest why this education is useful. Young females are more precise in answering this question:

*Some girls go to other countries to get a good education and when they come back to Afghanistan they can find good jobs, respect, and trust of people, because people know that they are very intelligent, educated and clever.*-Youth, female, Qala-e Reg, Herat.

### 4. The New Inclusion of Women

In three of the surveyed villages, and thanks to NSP, women have their own shura where they can debate and take decisions, then shared with the men’s shura.

Women’s participation in the election process and in deciding which projects to implement was mandatory. In the most difficult cases, it was not applied at all, but in most of the areas where it was judged possible, the implementing partners (NGOs implementing the program in the provinces) found it easier to conduct the processes distinctly and in parallel for men and women. Women, then, could elect their representatives to the female shura of the village, then decide on their own on a project to implement, either destined to women or to the whole community.

In these three villages, women therefore had dedicated funds and a project to select. In Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), they decided to bring electricity to the village, something which provided a large improvement for all the households. In Qala-e Reg (Herat), the female shura chose a literacy course for women. In this last village, women seem to be more concerned about their situation.
In Qala-e Reg and Kunjan (Herat) it is more frequent to meet women in the streets, always covered, but with a strong sense of participation and resolution. They have recently created a group for illiterate women to learn how to write and read and they feel confident in their future.

Accomplishing traditional tasks and transmitting them to the next generation is not enough anymore for many women who aspire to acquire and exert new skills, in order to take a greater role in the household’s economy. Overall, only educated women (and not in all cases) can have access to an independent job and a stable income. The rest of the women are marginalized in the economic sector. They have little room to contribute to the mobility of their household besides procreation. The new generation, more aware of their rights and envies are –hopefully- the answer.
VI. Inequality

1. Definitions of Inequality
Interviewees generally refer to inequalities more in the mathematical sense of differences in people, rather than in the more social sense of unequal access to opportunities. They sometimes keep this idea in mind even when they follow the second line of thought, involving more inequality with regards to external factors. This rather vague definition is explained by the fact that differences create some kind of inequalities in terms of access to facilities and advantages:

Inequality means not to be equal. There are people who have a lot of advantages and people who do not have the same facilities. – Basmina, female, 28, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sulla, Nangarhar

Following this idea, the majority of the interviewees mention three sources of inequalities: differences in wealth, in education, and in family structures.

Some people are rich and others are poor. Some of them have children and others don’t. Some of the people have problems and other don’t. In Dari, there is a proverb that says: “panj angusht brother ast brabar niast”, it means that five fingers belong to one hand but they are not equal. – LFPD, women, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

Inequality means not having the same amount of money because there are some people with money and others with no money at all. Inequality is not to have the same education or not to have the same family members. Some families are bigger than others. – Najiba, female, 28, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

Inequality in family structure is important: children are a source of power and wealth; in the absence of any social protection structure, the families expect their children to help them in case of problems or when they are old. In all ladders of life, the interviewees mentioned that the poorest families were those who did not have children to help them.

For a major part of the interviewees, though, economic differences create the large inequalities:

Inequality means there is no equality of access to physical and mental opportunities in a community. For instance, in our community one family has money while another doesn’t: this is an inequality. […] Some have jobs while the others don’t, it is an inequality. – Youth, women, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

This difference in wealth leads to real inequalities, as the same interviewees mention at a later point:

Economic inequality is not good in our community; people should have an equal life, of course, from an economic point of view. If all are rich and save money, they can build their community and educate their children. Such a community will be in consistent progress. If all are poor, they will focus on getting their essential goods, they will not think about education and the progress of their community. If half of the people in a community are rich, another half are poor, they also cannot do anything for their community, because in this situation, loving-money rich people don’t spend their money for the benefit of the community. – Youth, women, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

As seen in the examples above, most of the interviewees mention at some point or another, inequality led by difference in education:

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1. This distinction of difference and inequality will be kept in the analysis, for clarification purpose, but the quotes given will respect the terminology used by the interviewees.
Equality means that in our society some people are educated and some of them are uneducated or some people are rich and some of them are poor. Also, some girls have jobs and some of them are jobless. – LFPD, women, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Some groups mention another form of inequality, the unequal access to rights and to justice:

Inequality means not to be equal, not to be identical, and not to be judged in an equal way. In this community, there are inequalities of rights, inequalities of power, of economy and of politics. – LFPD, men, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Inequality means injustice and inconformity. – Abdul Walli, male, 22, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

Inequality between men and women is not immediately mentioned by the interviewees, but when asked about it, they usually acknowledge it, as is shown in section V (gender issues).

2. Levels of Inequality

Overall, interviewees acknowledge the possibility for high inequalities in the country, but think there is a lower level of inequality within their own community. This can be mostly explained by the small size of the communities or part of communities analyzed. This small size makes them largely homogenous. The largest community visited is Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), from where it is likely that people who have a largely higher social or economic position would leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H419A Division between people-Now</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 NO DIVISION</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 TO A VERY SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 TO A SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 TO A GREAT EXTENT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 TO A VERY GREAT EXTENT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid cases</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24 – Inequality in the Community, Now

2.1. Economic Inequalities

Since the communities observed are usually homogenous culturally, the bigger differences observed are economic, and are in most of the cases driven by access to land. As explained, families who do not have access to land and have to work for others, are usually placed under the community-perceived poverty line with little possibility to move across it. In some more radical cases than the ones observed, this leads to very big inequalities, with three castes: very rich landowners, who usually do not live in the community, smaller farmers with access to land and contracts with landowners, and peasants, sometimes hired on a daily basis, and usually in very weak and unstable situations.

Within the scope of this study, inequality in the communities is debated among the villagers. Some explain that there are important differences, while others maintain that these differences are not so large, as shown with an example taken from the same group in Sultanpur-e Sufia (Nangarhar)

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1 Similarly, Schütte quotes this answer in Mazar-e Sharif: “If there would be somebody wealthy or rich in our community, he would have moved from here already.” In Schütte, S., Poor, Poorer, Poorest: Urban Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Mazar-e Sharif, AREU, January 2006

2 Household questionnaire, question H419: “There are often differences in characteristics between people living in the same village/neighborhood such as differences in religion, ethnicity, social status or wealth. To what extent do factors like religion, social status or wealth divide people in the village/neighborhood from one another today? And ten years ago? Use a five point scale where 1 means no division and 5 means to a very great extent.”
There are a lot of inequalities in our community. Some of us have a lot of power and others don’t. One family has many sons and another family does not. – Rabia, female, housewife, 48, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

People are more aware of everything. Security for women is better now. Poor people can also benefit from new opportunities. In this community people are equal to each other. – Nafas Dil, female, housewife, 48, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

What can be expressed as the general case is that, while differences are strong, the inequalities are lesser: some people do have far more money than others, but this does not necessarily translate into large inequalities of right or power inside the community¹.

There is no social inequality in our community. In religious ceremonies, the rich and the poor meet in the mosque, eat together … Only, the rich seat at the head of the room and the poor seat at the bottom of the room. The youth differ only by the clothes they wear: the ones who have a high standard of living wear trousers and the rest wear traditional clothes. – Tahir, male, 25, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

People who acquire a far larger status that can lead to important inequalities usually leave the community to go to an area where they can have larger businesses, access to better health and education facilities, roads and electricity, like the following example in Herat of a man who acquired a position of power and responsibility:

Mohammed Nasir is member of the Welayati Shura [the newly elected provincial council], he is from our community [and] is now living now in Kabul. – Khan Bibi, female, housewife, 60, LFPD

In a way, it can be said that the years of successive difficulties have grounded the villagers (who are still living in their community) and they acknowledge only small differences between them.

Still, at a lower level, economic differences lead to inequalities of status: as expressed in many ladders of life, people who are above the community-perceived poverty line usually can save some money and slowly climb the ladder of life. Their success allows them to acquire respect in the community, and become trusted elders who have a say in community decisions. This difference of status is then passed on to their children (see below).

Two categories are systematically placed at the bottom of the ladder of life:

- The widows without children of working age are among the most vulnerable people in each community: they usually do not have any income besides small tailoring or embroidery work, they often rely on the solidarity of family or villagers. They share the same situation as aged men or couples who are not able to work anymore and have no children.
- The disabled are often also placed on the first step, except in Qala-e Reg where the six of them have land that they can sometimes cultivate, or lease for cultivation.

2.2. Inequality Created by Tradition and Culture

The women of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul) particularly stress the inequalities coming from the culture and level of education of the community members. This community is different from the others in that there are two main social groups of some importance: both are Hazara but one comes from Ghazni Province and the other from Parwan Province. Both groups explain that the culture and level of education is not the same across these groups:

The people coming from Dara-e Turkmen² are not free because they are very strict. This comes from their low education level: [one of the group member explained in Dari that

¹ As an example, people who are now several steps above others on the ladder of life in Dasht-e Rabat earn only 1,000 Afghanis (US$ 20) per month more.
Turkmen people can not speak, and can not work. People from Ghazni are more open minded. Although they are Hazara, they are educated. – Fatima, female, housewife, 50, LFPD

These differences in culture create inequalities between their family members:

In our society there are many social inequalities: some families allow their daughters to get an education and some families don’t because they cannot afford the expense. Those children are working for their families. Some families, even if they are poor, try their best to complete the education of their children because they know the importance of the education. – Hakima, female, 17, Youth, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

2.3. Consequences of Inequality

Inequality is usually considered a bad thing, even against the principles of Islam. Large inequalities lead to tensions, crime and violence, as proven in the past in some cases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H420 Division led to violence</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Yes</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 No</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid cases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25 - Link between Inequality and Violence

There are not so many differences between people in the community. Crime has increased in the last years and it is creating a very bad atmosphere in the community. In Dari, we have a proverb: “khoon as chiz meshawad as khoon jigari”, it means that when someone commits a crime or kills someone for money it is because he has been under tension and pressure and because there are inequalities in the community. – Nafisa, female, 25, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Economic differences lead to exploitation of the poor by the rich and the loss of freedom of the poorest, unqualified people who depend on their position and are unable to move:

Differences between the poor and the rich people are not good. The rich can behave arrogantly and not want to gather with the poor and this situation can create tension. For example: some poor people have to work 10 to 13 hours a day for rich people and they do not receive a lot of money because the rich know they need the job. It is the case of our neighbors, Khalil Shah and Juma Khan. – Mahbooba, female, 19, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat

3. Changes over Time

3.1. Changes observed in Inequality

a. Economic Inequalities

For now, most of the villages say that the inequalities are less important now than ten years ago. This can be explained by the conflict and the economic recession that existed in many places ten years ago, as well as the relative recent stabilization of the country.

1 People who are referred to as Turkmen in this quote are not from the Turkmen ethnicity, but come from Dara-e Turkmen, in Parwan Province. The person interviewed was actually from this group.
2 Understand: their low education gives them a low ability to do things properly.
3 Household questionnaire, question H420: “In the past 10 years, have any of these differences in this village/neighborhood ever led to violence?”
For most of the interviewees, inequalities have been reduced in a natural way by the growth and the multiplication of opportunities. New opportunities in general mean larger opportunities for everyone:

Compared to ten years ago, inequality decreased in our community. The gap between the poor and the rich is smaller. Work opportunities have become available for everyone. – Zair, male, student, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Approximately 100 families have benefited from these new livelihoods. During the last ten years the number of beneficiaries have been increasing more and more, because now our area has electricity and with electricity come new livelihoods. – Conflict Timeline, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Importantly, things are seen as changing: ten years ago, the meager existing opportunities were captured by the people in power. While this is still the case to a much lesser extent, the world of possibilities is now judged to be more open, even for the women of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul) where unemployment is high:

Most of the people became aware of everything. The security issues have been solved, women are freer than ten years ago to get education, the poor can also benefit from the new opportunities… – Latifa, female, housewife, 30, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

We have more equality now than in the past. Ten years ago, only our boys were able to go to school but now our girls can also go. In the past, few people were rich and now there are more people with wealth. – Najiba, female, 28, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

**b. Other Types of Inequality**

Interviewees all insisted on the link between wealth, power and respect among the community. When a family has wealth, it gains the respect of the rest of the village. Economic differences thus have an impact on the social status of the families. Correlatively to the lower economic inequalities, social differences are nevertheless considered lower now than ten years ago:

There is no social inequality where we live. All people live in the same conditions. Since people stopped fighting, they feel united. – LFPD, male, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

With an increased access to education and with economic development, women usually said these inequalities were lower than ten years ago. This positive view is, in some cases, justified, and in some others (as seen in Section V), more the expression of a confidence in the future. It is also explained by the radicalization of the situation of women brought about by the Taliban ten years ago.

There is less inequality than in the past ten years. Women can also go to school and they can work in the community. – Marian, female, housewife, 30, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

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### Table 26 – Inequality in the Community, Ten Years Ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division between people -10 Years Ago</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 NO DIVISION</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 TO A VERY SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 TO A SMALL EXTENT</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 TO A LARGE EXTENT</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 TO A VERY LARGE EXTENT</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid cases: 14 13 15 15 15 15

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1 Household questionnaire, question H419, 10 years ago (see previous section).
3.2. Who Benefits from New Opportunities

Some interviewees, nevertheless, disagree with the above statements (within the same village) and find that if power issues are less obvious, questions of capital are becoming more important, and the new opportunities are more available to the rich:

There is more inequality now than in the past. Poor people are poorer now and rich people are richer. If you have a good economic situation you can get a visa very easily, go to Iran, buy goods and sell them here. If you don’t have money, you can not do it. – Ghulam, teacher, elder, 45, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

Particularly in the city, where the main activities are oriented towards business, people express the need to have some available capital to start a business and profit from the new opportunities:

If people want to have a good life, they need to have money because you need money to start or maintain a business, or to bribe the higher authorities to give you a job. For this reason, it is more and more important. – Reza Barch, male, karachiwan, 56, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Access to credit is therefore quite important. But the main sources of credit, now as well as ten years ago, are essentially family and friends. In Dasht-e Barchi, a micro-credit institution apparently tried to start activities but most of the interviewees were not interested because either the loans were too small or essentially because they considered the interest rate was too high and they would not be able to repay their loans.

In Dasht-e Barchi again, a shopkeeper explains how people who had a better situation in the past could climb up again, finding opportunities in new technologies and in NGOs work, helped in this by their network, their capacity to manage businesses and their education.

Similarly to this, the example quoted p. 62 (Hassamudin’s story) showed someone who, in spite of the loss of his main source of income, was able to climb again thanks to his abilities and his social capital.
VII. Freedom, Power and Individual Agency

1. Freedom

1.1. Definitions and Status of Freedom

a. Definitions

When asked their definitions of freedom, the interviewees easily mention a number of different kinds of freedom: among the most common for men are freedom of speech and freedom of movement, followed by freedom of running one’s own business and freedom of religion.

“Freedom of religion” covers two concepts: freedom to practice Islam, and the degree of freedom allowed by Islam when respected fully, as opposed to a more western concept of freedom:

*Freedom of religion is the most important: to be able to do our rites completely and not being annoyed by anyone. Afghanistan is an Islamic country and we want to perform Islam freely.* – Zair Gul, male, student, 25, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

*There are two kinds of freedoms: one is according to the regulations of Islamic law and the second one is non-Islamic freedom.* – Mohibullah, male, 19, Youth, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

The women naturally add different types of freedom that most of the men do not think about: freedom to wear the clothes they want, not to wear the chadri, freedom to go to the bazaar, freedom of access to education and freedom to move around without a mahram.

*Being able to buy things from the bazaar is freedom.* – Maina, female, housewife, 55, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

For men and women, freedom is tightly related to security. Security is felt by most as conditioning the possibility for freedom:

*Freedom means security, because without security one can not work safely.* – Mohammad Hussain, male, karachiwan, 62, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Freedom is to be free in your work, to be able to take decisions and to have a peaceful environment. There is no difficulty for us and our children can go to school. – LFPD, men, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

Freedom is often linked to culture and education as well, as is shown in the quote found on page 70 about the cultural differences between the families of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul) that come from Ghazni compared to the ones who come from Dara-e Turkmen. People who have different cultures and different levels of education experience different degrees of freedom.

Freedom is also often related to wealth and they generally go together: more wealth brings more power and more freedom.

b. Status of Freedom

In all provinces, freedom has increased in most of its forms for most of the interviewees. Whether the interviewees were more or less happy about the Taliban regime, nearly all acknowledge that they have more freedom now than during this regime.
Table 27 - Forms of Freedom Compared to 10 Years Ago

Economic freedom is important for a part of the interviewees, who often mention the need for independence and for the possibility to “use your capital and assets freely”. Freedom of doing business is usually not considered a problem. The main limitations mentioned are licenses that the government tries to impose. In order to get these licenses, people of Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul) say that they have to pay bribes:

In our community, the government doesn't provide any kind of assistance to the businessmen. Instead it creates problems for some people such as bakers and PCO owners by asking for licenses and permits. – Reza Barch, male, karachiwan, 56, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

You only need money to open a business. It is very easy if you have money. – Zenatullah, male, officer, 28, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

However, this small annoyance is not really considered to be a major factor hindering the start of a business:

Yes, there is complete security in our community and there are no concerns in this regard. Everybody can start any kind of business here safely. – Zabiullah, male, shopkeeper, 28, LFPD, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

1.2. Freedom and Mobility

As seen in the above quote, freedom in business starts to be hindered by government. For the moment, it is more a question of inefficiency and corruption than a question of taxes: the largest part of the economy is informal, and the new taxation system on firms is not commonly applied to the kind of businesses the interviewees mention.

For legal and illegal businesses, freedom is probably at its peak in Afghanistan: the restored security (compared to the war time and excluding problematic areas) is an asset for most of the businesses, and the regulations are not yet fully defined nor, when defined, enforced.

There is no war, no stealing and people are free. They can do anything they want anywhere they want. Now people can find work and poverty has decreased. – Women, LFPD, Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

The two villages visited in Nangarhar Province, however, show the opposite of this, with the government decision to ban poppy cultivation seen as a strong limitation of freedom, hindering the economic mobility of the households.
In terms of non-business activity, freedom is considered as a factor of mobility for the households. Freedom of thought, and a certain relaxation of the cultural constraints, can lead to a large improvement in the well-being and economy of the people: access to education for women is a very important advantage; the possibility for women to work has an even more direct impact on the household economy; the few households who have abandoned the question of payment of the bride to the father-in-law see important costs or incomes - depending on their position - disappear. Numerous examples have been given in various sections of this report.

2. Power and Individual Agency

2.1. Power

Power is defined by the interviewees through various proxies: having authority, guns and money, a good reputation, physical force, good relations, “to know important people in the government” are signs of power. Often, having a good education is also a source of power, but in most of the cases, the essential elements that are linked to power are wealth and social networks.

In the past, people got power through money and the money came from production of poppy. Now, people try to get power through education. – Najiba, female, 28, LFPD, Padaw, Nangarhar

Power and money are mutually reinforcing. Indeed, having money is a source of power, and power attracts money: through nepotism and clientele networks, power and social relationship help gain access to good positions, and secure interesting deals.

The positions of power are described by the interviewees in very generic terms. Whether their notions of power in today’s Afghanistan come from direct exposure or from more generic, sometimes fantasized representations is difficult to decide.

On one hand, Afghans have had in the past exposure to people that had significant power: the commanders and warlords. On the other hand, commanders having direct power over the villages were never mentioned in the interviews. The only exception was in the case of Dasht-e Rabat key informants, who mentioned a commander in the Bagram area who controlled access to jobs for the US military, but who was not said to rule over the village.

As noted in sections III and IV, the actual power visible at the village level seems limited: power structures have little margin of action in most cases, and are more used to settling problems between families than to enforcing authoritarian decisions or to acting in favor of the village. The interesting type of power that remains as a factor of mobility is, then, more related to independence, freedom and individual agency, the form of power experienced at the household level. In this sense, then, education is an important asset for gaining the power to defend one’s own rights:

Having knowledge and education can increase freedom. If you are educated and you know about the rights of men and women, you can request your rights and ask to work outside the community or city. – Sheharaz, female, student, 25, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

2.2. Individual Agency

Among all the factors that were cited by the villagers as differentiating households, individual agency is the more basic and the more common. Hard work and good management are the two qualities which can help a household progress along the ladder of life, when it is not helped by external factors:

I and my husband worked a lot on the land and also cared for a lot of livestock in the past: I had 10 sheep, and now I have 15. Because we have worked very hard on our land to cultivate vegetables, wheat and other crops, we were able to get enough food from our land.
– Dan Go, female, carpet weaver and farmer, 30, Ladder of Life, Qala-e Reg, Herat
You can gain economic power by working hard and investing money without losing it. – Mohammed Yousuf, male, laborer, 26, LFPD, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Not working enough is, on the contrary, one of the main reasons that can push people back into poverty, as expressed in many Ladder of Life interviews:

It is difficult to move from one step to the other if people are not interested in working hard. If they work hard, it is not difficult. – Sabera, female, carpet weaver, 38, Ladder of Life, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

It is interesting to note that even in Dasht-e Barchi where high unemployment and an overall vulnerable situation were perceived, a large number of interviewees were glad to have security and normal life conditions which allowed them to start again slowly rebuilding their own lives. Most of them were not expecting much from the government or from international help, but were more focused on the possibility to work hard, save little by little, and be able to step out of poverty in this generation or the next one.

Among personal strategies identified to achieve progress, education plays an important role, as already seen. A large number of interviewees in all villages, and particularly women, expressed the necessity to provide education at any cost to their children, in order to secure a better future for them and through them, for the whole family.

Another individual strategy, not traditionally common in Afghanistan, resides in saving, sound economic management and investment. As shown in Sultanpur-e Sufia, years of poppy money can be washed away with four years of drought, leaving a large part of the village in poverty due to an inability to save. Saving money, and good management of the investment is not easy, but both are now considered by many households to be prerequisites to move out of poverty:

Abdulfattah is a disabled man and he got 30,000 AFA and started a small shop in the community. Now he has improved his small shop and made some savings to buy more products for his shop. – Khan Bibi, female, housewife, 60, LFPD, Qala-e Reg, Herat

As shown earlier, the ability to adapt to events, opportunism and risk taking are also among the individual strategies which proved successful for many of the interviewed movers.
VIII. Interaction across Factors

1. Is Mobility Linear or Discontinuous?

The specific exercise consisting in having a look at movement over the last ten years in Afghanistan creates a particular problem: the country was affected, during this period of time by at least two severe discontinuities: the Taliban period (1996-2001) and the drought (1999-2004, depending on the areas. These exogenous (from the households' point of view) discontinuities make it difficult to judge whether the economic mobility of the households can be continuous or not.

An analysis of the answers given by the interviewees in the Ladder of Life tool can nevertheless provide some insight on intrinsic factors of movement, once the factors linked to these events are removed. The tables besides and below show a list of factors contributing to upward, stagnating or downward movement as expressed in this exercise.

These factors have to be related to the previous sections. Some of them concern different levels or categories of people on the Ladder of Life: the various forms of support usually concern the lower categories (below the community-perceived poverty line) more, while obviously, increase in land productivity and access to storage or improved agricultural inputs concern the people who do have land, thus are higher on the Ladder of Life. A kind of mechanical relationship is already immediately noticeable at this stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village ID</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from the children</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances from abroad *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from government</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from the community</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from NGO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better access to agricultural inputs</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase land productivity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in market</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to storage</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to (more) land *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to credit</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound mgmt of domestic economy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social network</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good relations in the government</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the others</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for NGO *</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills improvement</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic diversity</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find work regularly</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion at work</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall economic growth</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership of a house*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard working</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Factors expressed in the categories definition

Table 28 - Main Factors of Movement expressed in Ladder of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village ID</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No access to land *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to agricultural inputs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.1. Poverty Traps

a. Access to Land

As expressed earlier, in all the rural communities, the lack of access to land is probably the most important factor limiting movement.

Given the scarcity of arable land and its diminution in the recent years due to water and irrigation issues, land is not easily acquired. It is expensive, when it is at all for sale.

Except when poppy is cultivated, the low level of productivity, the poor state of transportation, storage, marketing facilities and the limited possibility to export the production on the international market lead to a low income from agriculture: wheat generates approximately US$ 180 / hectare and grapes up to US$ 3,800 / hectare. At the very best, except for the wealthiest, a family owning five jeribs (one hectare) of grapes will get an income of US$ 300 / month from this surface. A peasant working on other people’s land will typically (for grapes) earn one fourth of the income generated by the land, hence quite often incomes lower than US$ 40 / month, when the surface he works on is small, or the productivity is low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of access to markets</th>
<th>√</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to storage</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition with imports</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought &amp; other natural catastrophe</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of possibility for export</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of government support</th>
<th>√</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of community assistance</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No supporting children *</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economy – Growth – Employment

| High prices | √ |
| Low level of growth or recession | √ |
| Unemployment * | √ |
| Loss of employment | √ |
| Retirement | √ |
| Low level of govt. salaries | √ |
| Lack of access to credit | √ |

Infrastructure

| New roads hinder local market | √ |

Family

| Family conflicts | √ |
| Diseases & death of working family member * | √ |
| Wedding | √ |
| No good morality | √ |
| Misngmnt of domestic economy | √ |

Poverty

| No ownership of house * | √ |
| No capacity to save money | √ |

Others

| Lack of skill or education | √ |
| Security issues, war | √ |
| Migration | √ |
| Bad luck | √ |
| Disability * | √ |
| Laziness, no hard work | √ |
| Impossib. to maintain illegal activity | √ |

* Factors expressed in the categories definition

This situation does not allow much room for savings and investment, nor for providing education to children who are of working age and could earn an additional income for the family. The scarcity of demand for unskilled labor (or the excessive offer), give unskilled workers little room for negotiation with their employers. Many of them are only employed on a part-time basis and have to find other, unskilled, seasonal work in surrounding cities outside of agricultural seasons, for an often very small gross income (from 100 to 200 AFA / day, US$ 2 to US$ 4), from which extra expenses (food, lodging and transportation) have to be deducted.

All rural ladder of life interviews explained that in the absence of exceptional help in the form of remittances or governmental land distribution, the capacity of these types of households to escape poverty are limited to the ones offered by the next generation, their children.

b. Property and Capital Ownership

More generally than access to land, the lack of property or capital ownership is a factor usually linked to chronic poverty. In the visited urban area, where house rents were not as high as in other

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1 Source: Altai Consulting for UNDP, Market Sector Assessment in Horticulture, 2004

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Table 29 – Main Factors of Stagnation or Falling Down expressed in Ladder of Life
neighborhoods of Kabul, the poorest families were described as the ones who did not own their house and had to pay rent. In several individual life stories, people expressed the fact that they almost fell into poverty when they were forced by the conflict to move to a place where they had to rent a house. This kind of recurrent expense added on the burden of a family with a low income is in many cases a factor of stagnation below the community-perceived poverty line.

In the absence of credit sources, access to capital is extremely difficult, if not impossible for the poorest. The only possibility mentioned was, again, external, exceptional help from NGOs or the government. Even when credit sources are available, they usually consist of (in 2006) small loans which are barely enough for micro-enterprise. Furthermore, the residents of Dasht-e Barchi who saw a micro-finance institution come to their community explained that the interest rate was too high for their repayment capacity in their current situation (and this, notwithstanding the formal interdiction that Islam opposes to credit with interest).

c. Family Structure

On the bottom step of the ladder of life, in urban or rural areas, are the systematically placed widows and old people without children, along with the unemployed and beggars. The family structure plays an important role in the movement of households. Because of the lack of a social protection system, the people who do not have, or lose, the capacity to work are confined to living from the assistance of the community, which can hardly provide more than the bare minimum to ensure their survival.

Women do not usually work autonomously, or at least not enough to provide themselves a decent income. If they are used to helping in farm tasks, keeping livestock, and tailoring, they are still essentially dependent on men to interact with others, run the business, attend meetings and take most of the decisions – all roles culturally attributed to the male members of the family. This cultural lack of autonomy makes women very vulnerable when they do not have husbands or male children who can take over these responsibilities. A similar situation is observable in ageing men without children, who cannot physically work anymore, or are forced into mandatory retirement.

1.2. Vulnerabilities

These examples of poverty traps show a first set of sources of non-linearity in the movement out of poverty. A second source of non-linearity can be found in the vulnerabilities that affect households above the community-perceived poverty line. Indeed, the households placed on the steps just above the community poverty line are often likely to fall into poverty if exposed to life accidents: in the visited communities, families were usually considered to be exposed to large vulnerabilities until the upper steps of the ladder of life.

The lack of a large family is, as we have seen, a first vulnerability for the household. Children often represent the only social protection system allowing households to stay out of poverty. Other more common vulnerabilities in rural parts of Afghanistan are due to insufficient amounts of land for large families; low agricultural productivity generated by a lack of access to inputs of good quality; a production that is still too oriented towards self-sustenance due to a lack of investment capacity – indeed, many farmers have to keep growing low income vegetables and cereals since they can not afford to not use their land while they are switching to the production of cash crops that could generate a far larger income.

Quite often, during the interviews, it appeared that accumulation was not a common reflex, at least in the visited communities, until people started realizing their vulnerability when facing a major event. The capacity to save money, although often considered a major factor for movement, seems not to have been a common practice when a better situation allowed it. This behavior might explain why in Sultanpur-e Sufla, most of the people considered themselves poor when they had benefited from very comfortable income from poppy for at least seven years (from 1992 when the farm-gate prices started to increase rapidly to 1999 when the village was hit by the drought).
2. Illustration: Examples of Typical Life Stories

2.1. Mover in Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), female

Events:
- Born in 1954 in Dara-e Turkmen, Parwan Province in family of agricultural laborers. Does not have any schooling.
- She marries in 1974 to an agricultural laborer.
- They move to Kabul in 1976 in her father-in-law house in Dasht-e Barchi, where her husband works as a laborer.
- Her husband dies in 1981. Because of economic problems and to escape the tanzim fights, she returns in 1983 with her children to Dara-e Turkmen to live with her father-in-law. The economic burden on his small income creates large economic problems.
- She marries again in 1985 to her late husband’s brother, uneducated agricultural laborer. They still cannot support the whole family.
- In 1987, they move to Pakistan, and she starts to weave carpets, while her husband works for daily wages. They can support their family.
- In 1995, they move to Kabul, keeping the same activities, and the same level of income.
- In 1996, the Taliban take power over Kabul. The family moves back to Ghorband to escape them. Her husband works again as an agricultural laborer, but their income is far lower than in Kabul.
- In 2002, after the fall of the Taliban, they can return to Dasht-e Barchi. With a very little amount of money, they can rent a dry-cleaning shop, then another one. Their grown-up children can work with their father. Rapidly, she can stop working, and their economic situation is good.
2.2. Chronic Poor in Dasht-e Rabat (Parwan), male

Events:
- Born in 1980 in a family of agricultural laborers.
- 1991: Starts working at the age of 10 with his father and brothers. Happy to learn farming.
- 1996: The Taliban take control of Kabul. His brothers have to leave the family house with their own families. Economic difficulties in the family. He has to do extra work to complement the family income.
- 1999: The Taliban evacuate the village. He is imprisoned in Kabul for a year – mental and physical health problems. His family goes to Pakistan, where they survive by collecting papers.
- 2001: Upon his liberation, he goes to Pakistan to find his family. Begins to learn masonry.
- 2002: Moves to Karachi and starts working as a mason in a construction company. Earns 2,000 PAK Rupees / month (US$ 33). Considers this the turning point of his life.
- 2003: Comes back to Afghanistan. Found this relatively early return an opportunity in the construction sector given the lack of skilled workers. Besides, continues working as agriculture laborer.
- 2006: He is a father, has returned to a stable condition where he earns enough money to feed his family and live happily, but not enough to save any money or to be able to help anyone. Enjoys the respect the villagers pay him, and considers himself a grey-beard.

2.3. Mover in Sultanpur-e Sufla (Nangarhar), male

Events:
- Consolidation
- Born in 1987 in Sultanpur-e Sufia, His father is a shopkeeper, selling fresh fruits.
- In 1986, the village is bombed by Najibullah's army. His family escapes to Pakistan. His father and eldest brother start working in a brick kiln.
- In 1989, he stops going to school and starts working for the family at the brick factory.
- In 1992, the Mujahidin overthrow Najibullah government. They can come back to their village. He helps his father to work on the land.
- In 1993, one of his brothers is wounded during a fight between tanzims.
- In 1996, his father dies, leaving debts. He has to repay them.
- He marries in 1998.
- The same year, he escapes the Taliban and the consequent lack of job opportunities, and goes with his family to Peshawar again. He finds a job as a painter in a construction company. He learns useful skills, and opens his own business in 1999.
- He comes back in 2002 to his village, starts working there and saving money.
- In 2004, he can start a painting company in the village. He benefits from the reconstruction of the area.

2.4. Mover in Padaw (Nangarhar), male

- Born in 1941, in Sanpoy village, Nangarhar Province.
- He starts working in 1956, as a car cleaner.
- Becomes a driver in 1961. Earns a good income, and can save money on this.
- In 1974, he purchases 3 jeribs of land, and start working in the fields, while continuing his work as a driver.
- In 1984, during the heavy fights in the village between the Mujahidin and the Communist government, his 14 years old son is killed. He moves to Pakistan. He stays unemployed for two years, living in a refugees' camp.
- In 1987, he receives a small amount of money from an NGO. He starts working as a driver between the camp and Peshawar.
- In 1992, when the Mujahidin overthrow the Communist government, he moves back to his village with his family, to find his house destroyed and his land ruined.
- The same year, his sons start cultivating poppy, providing a very good income to the family. Thanks to this, he stops driving a car, because he does not need to work.
- In 1993, he can buy three cows for his family.
- They stop cultivating poppy in 2005, but have enough money to invest in a car spare part business. One of his son opens a shop in Turkham, on the border with Pakistan. They have a successful life, and his grandsons are all going to school.
2.5. Chronic rich in Qala-e Reg, Herat, Male

- Born in 1956 in Qala-e Reg, Herat Province in a farmers’ family.
- His father dies in 1966. He has to stop going to school, and to help his brothers working in the fields. They split his father’s land among the four of them, leaving very little for each.
- In 1978, he joins the army for his military service, because the land is not enough to sustain the whole family.
- He marries in 1981.
- In 1984, during the heavy conflict on the village between the Mujahidin and the Communist regime, he escapes with his family to Mashad, Iran, with some money lent by a relative. For two years, he cannot find a job.
- In 1986, his brothers help him find a job in a kiln. He can purchase furniture and rent a house for his family.
- The same year, his mother dies. He cannot go back to Afghanistan for her funerals.
- He returns to Afghanistan when the conflict stops, in 1992. He works in a brick kiln in Herat province.
- In 1996, when the Taliban come to the area, the activity at the kiln stops, and he loses his work. He goes back to work on his land.
- In 2000, he gets a job as an employee with the new government. He can still work on his land on his spare time.
- In 2003, one of his sons gets married.
- In 2004, one of his son dies of cancer, aged of 10.
- In 2005, the village is connected to the electricity grid, and he buys a TV. The same year, he also can buy a cow and two sheep.
- In 2006, two of his sons work and earn money for the family, while the others are at school.
2.6. Mover in Padaw (Herat), male

- Born in 1963 in Padaw, Herat province.
- In 1975, he starts working with his brother, collecting firewood, and selling it in Herat city. His brother has a truck.
- In 1978, the conflict starts between the Mujahidin and the Communist regime. They cannot continue their work anymore, and have to sell their truck.
- In 1980, the fights become heavy in the area. They cannot go to Herat city (7 km from there), and have to hide in their house. They leave to Mashad, Iran, soon after. He gets two jobs at the same time, as a mason and as a watchman.
- In 1987, he returns to Padaw with some money, and gets married, but has to go back to Iran in 1988 because the security situation has not improved, and to escape being drafted in the army.
- He comes back to the village in 1990, to face unemployment. He joins the Mujahidin, but does not get money from them. He loses all the money he saved during the two years he spent in Iran.
- He moves again to Iran in 1991, but cannot find a good job, and faces problems sustaining his family, so he comes back to Afghanistan in 1992, and enlists in Ismail Khan's army. He is transferred to Shindand district, and does not earn enough money to sustain his family.
- In 1995, after a battle against the Taliban, he is held prisoner for a few months in Grishk.
- In 1996, his father gives him some money, and he can purchase a car, to start working as a taxi.
- In 1998, he sells the taxi to purchase a better one, but does not, spends all the money, and stays at home, unemployed.
- Later this year, he returns to Iran, and works day and night to save some money.
- He comes back to Afghanistan in 2000. He uses his savings to purchase a new car, and starts working again as a driver. He now earns enough money to sustain his family.
IX. Aspirations of Youth

1. Aspiration of Youth

1.1. Aspirations

Most of the male and female youth want to have a profession in the future. Young women would like to continue their studies, and almost every young man wants to have an occupation not related with his actual job. Their aspirations are to have a shop, to be a driver, an electrician (Kabul and Nangarhar) or to become a lawyer, a politician or an agronomist (Herat).

I want to be the owner of a factory. My father is an elder and my mother is a housewife. I am a farmer now and I have studied up to the ninth grade. – Sharifullah, male, 25, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

I want to have a tailor shop. My father is unemployed and my mother is a housewife. I work in a printing house and I have studied until tenth grade. – Abdul Wail, male, 24, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

The farmers’ children usually do not want to follow the same path. The difficulties their parents deal with when they cultivate the land (e.g. drought, the ban on poppy cultivation) have deeply affected their livelihoods and have also had an impact on their wishes.

Only when their father has an independent position (e.g. electrician, driver, shopkeeper) are the youth interested in having the same type of work. In this case, their income is more protected. Their parents can teach them their skills and the business is already functioning. Most of the interviewed movers have two occupations, as independent workers and farmers. The young certainly see in this example a good way towards mobility: to cultivate the land is not enough.

Young women are more likely to follow their mother’s occupation, like tailoring or embroidery. This is comprehensible because the lack of education impedes them from learning other and therefore finding a different livelihood. In addition, an Afghan woman has to be able to sew and to embroider to make her trousseau before getting married:

I am also doing needle work and I want to go on with it because Turkmen people are very conservative and they never let women go out of the house to work. – Nasiba, female, embroiderer, 19, Youth, Dasht-e Barchi

Most of the young females complained about their lack of education and the absence of opportunities for them. This lack of education prevents them from having other professions:

I am not educated but I want to learn tailoring to help my family. My father is very weak and he can not work. My brother is also helping us working as a laborer. – Nafisa, female, 25, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

We would like to continue our education but there is no female teacher in the community. If our father gives us more opportunities to work outside our home, we will be able to afford to continue our education. –Nafisa, female, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Qala-e Reg (Herat) is the only notable exception, where all the young, male and female are still studying and all of them want to have a career. Women are more tempted by being teachers, journalists, doctors or engineers and men would prefer to become politicians, agronomists or lawyers. In this community, most of the children started their education in Iran. The proximity of both a primary and secondary school is probably another reason for their schooling:

I am a student. I want to be a good journalist in the future. My father is a mullah and my mother is a housewife. –Atifa, female, 18, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat
1.2. Factors Helping or Hindering their Future

The young seem to be very aware of the factors that will help or hinder progress in their future. All these factors are interrelated. General factors linked to peace, economic growth, security, good infrastructures (e.g. roads, hospitals, schools), good governance (equal, active, attentive) are important:

*Having electricity, gas, and constructing the roads of the region.* - Abdul Wail, male, 24, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

Community factors such as proximity of schools, good education, opportunities to find work in the area are often cited:

*Suitable conditions for higher education, peace, security and health.* - Qudratullah, male, student, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Individual factors, including the support of their family and friends, good health, personal skills and relations also matter:

*Humeera and Samira are rich but they do not feel free. They can not go anywhere, they can not wear good dresses and they can not talk with their parents about their problems.* - Youth, female, Qala-e Reg, Herat

The young hope to be helped by their parents and by the government. Their parents can give them financial and psychological support while the government can improve the economy and security.

*If our government and our parents provide these things to us, our future will be very good and in a few years, we will be able to help our country and our people.* - Youth, female, Qala-e Reg, Herat

In communities like Sultanpur-e Sufla (Nangarhar), where four the six interviewees have lost their fathers, not only do young men have to start working to support their family but they have also lost any chance to be helped by their parents.

Overall, there are more differences between young women and young men than between different communities. Young women always complain about how hard it is for them to study: schools that are very far away (Padaw, Nangarhar), the lack of female teachers (Dash-e Barchi, Kabul), the absence of security and family support (Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar) are the most important hurdles to the achievements of their goals.

2. Youth and Freedom

2.1. Concepts of Freedom

Freedom and economic mobility are interrelated and can help a young individual move up, but to be free is not enough to progress economically:

*People from Ghazni are more free because of their education, their knowledge, their customs and culture. People who have awareness and money also have more freedom: they can afford to educate their children.* - Maryam, female, 18, Youth, Dash-e Barchi, Kabul

Freedom of movement is not only to go out of the home (female) or the community (male). It is also to be able to travel and to live abroad without any restrictions. In communities near the border with Iran and Pakistan, like Padaw (Nangarhar) and Qala e-Reg (Herat), as well as in Kabul, there is a westernization of the concept of freedom:
People who have come from United States and Europe [are freer] because they are more open minded and the government respects them. – Habibullah, male, 24, Youth, Dash-e Barchi, Kabul

You are free if you can wear a trouser, if you are able to have a TV, if you don’t have a long beard. – Zeenatullah, male, 24, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

In Kabul and in Nangarhar, freedom is not related to being poor or rich: capitalists and nomads can enjoy the same degree of freedom. In Herat, by opposition, a poor man can never be free but for some, wealth creates problems that can hinder freedom:

Rich people might not feel free because of their money: they are always afraid that their money can create problems for them. – Razia, female, 20, Youth, Dash-e Barchi, Kabul

The poor are not free but still there are some rich people who don’t enjoy a free life: like smugglers who have everything but feel no freedom. They fear they will be captured and punished. – Raima, female, 19, Youth, Dash-e Barchi, Kabul

Capitalists, businessmen and nomads have more freedom because with money they can solve any problem. Nomads are independent and free to choose where to go: Kabul in winter or Jalalabad in summer. – Male, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Youth feel very comfortable talking about freedom as long as it does not attack their religion and culture.

Sometimes the TV broadcasts some programs which are against Islam. – Hakima, female, 17, Youth, Dash-e Barchi, Kabul

In every community, education and freedom always go together; the more educated you are the more free you can be:

My father who is the head of an educational department has a lot of freedom because he knows his rights. – Yahya, male, 19, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat.

2.2. Youth, Freedom and Gender

Important discrepancies in the degree of freedom experienced by young men and women are acknowledged in all the communities: young women always have less freedom than their male counterparts. In Nangarhar, young men are more conservative than in other communities, maybe influenced by stricter traditions, and they suggest that the “reclusion” of the young women is to maintain their honor as well as that of their family:

Men have more freedom than women because women have to respect the tradition and culture of the community. Men have more freedom because they have to work hard to find food for the women. – Male, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Young women, in opposition to their mothers, take this inequality very seriously. They are very conscious of the disproportion between them and men:

Men can experience freedom but women can not. Men can go outside the community and out of the country without any problem but women can never do that. – Nafisa, female, 25, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

If young women can not move out of their homes, travel alone, be able to meet new people, express their feelings and have the same rights as men, then it is almost impossible for them to move out as individuals. It is only through their husbands that they can economically progress. Social acceptance and education play a key role in all this process.
3. Youth and Power

3.1. Definitions of Power

Several Dari proverbs, cited by young men in Dasht-e Barchi, explain well their favorite ideas on power: "Tawana buwad harke dana buwad", 'who has the knowledge is powerful', and 'Abi zur sar bala merawad', 'the powerful water goes from the bottom to the top'. For young males, power is synonymous with knowledge, money and relations.

Power means to have good health, to be physically strong, to have authority in the community and to have higher education. It means to have money, to have land or to have a high post in the government. – Male, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

If you have power you can develop your finances and you can have a high position in the government. For instance a person who has a high position is very powerful. If someone is a businessman or has higher education, he has power. – Nafisa, female, 19, Youth - Padaw, Nangarhar

In communities like Dasht-e Barchi (Kabul), Dash-e Rabat (Parwan), Sultanpur-e Sufia and Padaw (Nangarhar) young males always make a connection between power and weapons. Years of conflicts and insecurities have had an impact on the young generation. Smuggling and working hard are also seen as the best system to approach power.

Some obtain power via knowledge and education. Some obtain power from the barrel of a gun. The others obtain power by trafficking narcotics. – Youth, women, Dash-e Rabat, Kabul

In my opinion, there is a relationship between power and moving out of poverty. For instance, a poor man needs money. Somebody gives him a gun to carry out subversive activities and finally he rescues himself from the poverty thanks to power. – Raima, female, 20, Youth, Dash-e Rabat, Kabul

People can get power if they have weapons and firearms or if they are very clever and they have good relations with others. – Nafisa, female, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

If you work very hard, you can also have power and you lose power if you don’t work hard or if you have bad relations who don’t help you. – Jamila, female, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Politicians, the elders, the mullah and commanders are also perceived by the youth as the most powerful.

In my opinion, the politicians are the most powerful people, and also the rich, the warlords and the high ranking state officials. They are powerful because they can solve their problems very rapidly and they are afraid of nobody. – Najia, female, student, 19, Youth, Dash-e Rabat, Kabul

The chief of the village, the elders of the village and the mullah have more power because people obey what they say. The workers have less power because people don’t listen what they have to say. – Sangar, male, daily worker, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

3.2. Are Young People Powerful?

The overall idea shared by all young men and women is that it is important to be powerful in order to have relations and to protect one’s family and assets. Female youth point out the importance of using this power for the benefit of the community:

Power is a very good thing for everyone: it helps to get education, to earn money or to get a better life. If someone is powerful, he can be respected by his family and society. Everyone should use power in a positive way, not in a negative way. Power is good if it is used in right
To have power is always good if you use it in a good way. God is kind and helpful because he is powerful. Everyone wants to have power and be able to give education to their children. – Nafisa, female, 25, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

If people are powerful, they are respected in the community, they can have higher posts in the government and they can marry any girl they want to. – Male, youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

In all the communities but especially in Dasht-e Rabat (Kabul) and in Sultanpur-e Sufia, (Nangarhar), young men consider themselves, and are considered, powerful because they are physically stronger than others. They are quite optimistic about their role: even if they have no money - an important requisite to be powerful - they have a physical strength that elder males do not have.

There are young people who are powerful: maybe they don’t have money but they are physically stronger than others. And there are also young people who are not very powerful because they cannot find any job and they are not helping their family. – Tahira, female, 20, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

Youth can be powerful if they have physical power to work hard and they can find work easily if they have a high education. – Qudratullah, male, student, 18, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

For the youth, the relationship between power and moving out of poverty is clear: it is difficult to move up if one does not have power. On the contrary, if one has power, one is not poor. Wealth is, in this case, vital. Free education for all is considered to be the only solution:

There is a strong relationship between being powerful and moving out of poverty. You can’t be rich and not powerful, or poor and powerful. – Nabila, female, 22, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

The powerful can never be poor. There is a lot of corruption in the government. – Youth, male, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

The powerful can never be poor. And the poor can never be powerful. There is no link between being powerful and being poor. In this community there are no rich people who do not have power. Like Malawi Qayoum, he has a good life and he is powerful as well. – Youth, female, Qala e Reg, Herat

3.3. Youth Participation and Political Power

For the youth, political power is not well distributed in the community because there is a strong link between economic power and political power. Politicians have to have money if they want to succeed. Only in Padaw, do young interviewees disagree with this idea: a politician of the area was elected although he was poor.

In general, the youth did not seem to be interested in getting involved in politics. They were usually critical of the political world. None of the interviewees mentioned they belonged to a political party.

Political inequality exists everywhere. Those who have political power also have economic power. They always think about themselves and their own party and seek good positions in the government. Sometimes, they disobey the law. – Male, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar
Young people in the village are not interested in any political party. We want to live in freedom. – Youth, male, Padaw, Nangarhar

In Kabul and in Nangarhar, the youth do not have any voice or opinion in the decision-making process within their village, and some of them regret this:

Only old people can participate in decision-making in the community. Young people can not participate and their opinions are not taken seriously. Youth do not participate in decision-making because they have to go work and earn money for their family and they are always busy. – Nafisa, female, 25, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

Young people should participate in community affairs because they have the energy and the knowledge to do something for the future and for the improvement of the community. – Tahira, female, 20, Youth, Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

They sometimes participate in youth associations, where they debate about different subjects. Qala-e Reg (Herat) is the only exception to the lack of participation of the youth in public affairs: there, the youth have a dedicated shura, which interacts with the district council:

We have a shura for adults and another shura for young people. We meet together twice a month. The chief of the shura collects 20 AFA per month from each member and when someone has a problem, we give this money to him or her. – Parisa, female, 18, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat

4. Youth and Democracy

Democracy is perceived by the interviewed youth as a very positive concept. Both young men and women are pleased to have the right to elect their representatives as a way to participate in the formation of their country. Young men have more information about how a candidate is elected.

Democracy means to govern for the people, and to have access to the government. It means to have equal rights and to choose your own representatives without any type of pressure. – Najeeb, male, 25, Youth, Dasht-e Barchi

If theoretically they know how democracy should work, the youth can not promote changes in the community or participate in decision-making. This lack of involvement makes them sad because they believe that it is their right to participate.

Youth should be active and free to participate in decision-making, because the youth will be the wealth of our country in the future. Elder people do not invite the youth because they think that they do not need their advice to take good decisions. – Zahra, female, 22, Youth, Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

Only young females in Herat think they have an important responsibility in their communities. Maybe this new idea is due to the implementation of a new women shura:

Youth have an important role in the district council; because our elders know that in the future their society and their community will be governed by us. Elders requested us to join them. – Naima, 18, female, Youth, Qala-e Reg, Herat.

If young people in these six surveyed communities believe in democracy, none of them trust their politicians: they are considered to promote their own interests. Young men believe that most of the government officials are engaged in bribery and corruption. Female groups think that only a few officials are engaged in these types of activities.
5. Hopes of the Youth for the Future

Overall, young men and women are very optimistic and positive about the future of the community and the country. But, in their opinion, several reforms have to be made: education has to be better for both male and female youth, security has to be maintained and bribery and nepotism have to be eradicated.

If security and the equal human rights of men and women are ensured in our country and the number of educated people increases in our society, the local government and democracy will be better in the future. – Youth, female, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

Yes, there will be more changes, especially concerning bribery, corruption and administrative reforms and I am optimistic for my future. – Youth, male, Dasht-e Rabat, Kabul

Only Allah knows the future. We hope that bribery and nepotism will be eradicated from our community. We wish that everyone has a job according to their merit and their talent. Now the problem is like a snake but in ten years it will become like a dragon. – Youth, male, Sultanpur-e Sufia, Nangarhar

We believe that the future will be better. People believe in democracy and now, we have the possibility to raise our voices and ask for our rights. The community will be better in the future. – Robina, female, 18, Youth, Padaw, Nangarhar

Democracy is better now than ten years ago and it will be better in the next ten years. Our people can go to school and university, girls can go out of the country to get education, women can work, peace and security is better too. We wish that in future everyone has a job according to their merit and talent. – Abdul, male, 19, Youth, Qala e-Reg, Herat.

6. Conclusion

In all the communities, youth showed somewhat similar opinions and hopes. While young men do not want to cultivate the land and become farmers, young women are more willing to pursue their mother’s occupation.

Both male and female youth show signs of a more modern idea of freedom than their parents. Young men affirm the opinion that independence is important to move up. Young men, however, share the same ideas as adult men about women’s reclusion and duties. Young women of all communities place all their hopes in education, which they consider the best way to change their own situation, and that of the whole country.

The government has to play an important role too, but is criticized by the youth, who show little confidence in its current actions and power. The political class should give an example of transparency, resolution and unity. For the moment, young men are only interested in politics when their fathers are engaged in it:

The ones whose fathers are affiliated with a party support their father. In general, the youth are not interested in enrollment in the party. They can register in the party but they do not want to. – Youth, male, Padaw, Nangarhar

Families who are on a movement upward or rich usually encourage their children to continue their studies, giving them possibilities for further movement. Young males and females with no father, or whose father is unemployed fear they will have to deal with more problems unless they are helped by another relative. The youth see education, a helpful family environment, and individual performance and dedication as the best ways to escape from poverty.

Finally, the youth insist on the importance of unification in the country to secure a better future.
One finger can do nothing alone; five fingers can do more things if they are together. - 
Youth, male, Padaw, Nangarhar
X. Conclusions and Policy Implications

This study tried to illustrate, through six cases studies taken in various environments, different factors to take into account when trying to measure changes in the wealth and well-being of Afghan households. The events that occurred in the specific time-frame of this study had an impact on the analysis: different exposure to the Taliban or the drought, different situations at the end of the Soviet regime or different involvement in the tanzim fights led to quite specific situations in the visited villages.

In many cases, the answers collected have been too few or too varied to formulate a precise idea of the most important factors, but could nevertheless provide lively illustrations of specific occurrences of these factors and the interactions between them. The six communities thus somewhat represent ideal types of a few specific aspects of a varying environment for Afghan households.

Many questions stay open that would need more extensive research on a broader sample. Who were the households that benefited the most from the migration? Were there particularly successful strategies for the poor in migration to escape poverty? What helped them most improve their situation durably? What was the right time to come back? What employment strategy is the best for households? What level of access to credit does a household need to start a successful activity and escape poverty? What is the real long-term efficiency of the “procreation strategy” and how does it vary in different environments? What is the impact of health issues on households’ movement capacity?

Specific research on these points, as well as baseline studies, will be needed to have a more definite answer to the initial question “how do people move out of poverty?” In the meantime, Afghanistan is again on the edge of important changes: its years of war and drought have somewhat shrunk the differences between people. The new growth, however, if it is sustained, will benefit differently certain villages and even certain households, probably leading to increased stratification. The rural poor have already started to seek better opportunities in the cities and are adding to the existing burden in under-equipped cities.

The government’s policy for development during the next five years is in the process of being defined. The main factors of movement seen in the previous sections, as well as their interaction, and the mutations observed, lead to formulate a few recommendations in terms of factors to look at more precisely while defining this policy.

Policy Implications

Until recently, the major part of the Afghan poor was thought to live in rural areas, and the central role of agriculture in the country’s economy, joined with counter-narcotics policies and an important potential seen in the agriculture production, led the focus of the international aid to be placed on the rural world. It appears now that the urban households are already the most vulnerable, and that this situation is likely to increase with a starting rural exodus. While the current policies for urban development address the question of public services delivery, little is planned to help absorb economically a growing population of urban poor. The focus of future policies will need to focus increasingly on other livelihoods than agriculture.

The commuting strategies to province centers observed in the study seem an interesting behavior to explore. They allow a certain form of flexibility and risk management, while they do not weight as much as seasonal migration on the cities’ infrastructures and public services. The lack in public peri-urban transportation facilities is considered a problem for both commuters and small farmers in need of quick access to wholesale markets for a limited volume of products.

The opportunistic migration to Pakistan (essentially) remains for many households a way to palliate the limited resources and high cost of living in Afghanistan. Future policies reducing these migrations might have a major impact on these households.
The lack of skill is a problem already acknowledged by the government, and the ANDS expresses the wish to train 150,000 men and women in marketable skills by the end of 2010. The large mass of the rural migrants, seasonal and semi-permanent, are likely to be unskilled and to put pressure on the urban, informally organized labor markets. The monitoring and organization of these markets might prove necessary, in order to define appropriate policies.

Lack of access to credit is a major hurdle to the development and movement of both urban and rural households, especially for the poorest ones. The credit currently available through micro-finance institutions is thought to be useful for small activities, but has far too low credit ceilings to allow access to working capital. In addition, repayment terms are too short, with too high interest rates for short-term credit.

The impact of the mentioned macro-economic factors on the poor should be properly assessed, if a series of pro-poor strategies are to be devised, keeping in mind that a small variation on income or prices can have a large impact on the households’ poverty level.

Finally, the impact of community-based development programs such as NSP seems to generally have a positive impact in the visited communities. These programs serve two purposes in addition to bringing development projects to the community: they strengthen community cooperation and networks and they build the capacity of the community leaders. The sample communities show good progress in these two goals, though with room for improvement in both. A sustained attention and legitimacy given to CDCs is likely to build on these achievements.
XI. Annexes

1. Sampling: Selection of Provinces and Research Questions

More than trying to be representative, the sampling plan for Afghanistan aimed at trying to maximize the possibility for diversity. For this, the following variables were considered in the choice of provinces or large areas, the data not being available at the district or the community level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ethnicity</strong></th>
<th>Include the main three ethnicities (Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazara)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict</strong></td>
<td>Have the selected locations been exposed to the different major conflicts in the country? The four major conflicts are included, with a specific focus on the last three that occurred during the time scope of the study: Mujahidin vs. communists, Mujahidin vs. Mujahidin, Mujahidin vs. Taliban, Taliban vs. Coalition Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Index</strong></td>
<td>A development index has been created from a few variables accessible at the community level: presence or absence of nearby education facility, health facility, drug store, distance to district center, status of the road. These data are aggregated at the district level. This development index varies between 0 (lowest availability of facilities) to 10 (highest).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Intake</strong></td>
<td>An average number of households with chronic food deficit (less than the average 2100 Kcal / capita / day) is used to evaluate vulnerability. Two categories are used (less than 30% or more than 70% of the households in the district are below deficit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poppy Cultivation</strong></td>
<td>Historical data across the last 5 years. Include data about cultivation and government-led eradication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Migration History</strong></td>
<td>Proximity from major migration destination, migration data and repatriation data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donors’ Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Funds disbursed in each province.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30 - Main Variables considered for Sampling

Other criteria were linked to the time-frame and organization requirements for the project:
- Selected locations should not present a security risk for the data collection team (which included women and foreigners);
- Selected locations should not be farther than 2 hours drive from a provincial center where the team could safely stay at night;
- In the provinces involving about one day travel from Kabul, two locations were selected, in order to reduce time spent on travel.

The three areas selected were:
- Nangarhar Province (two locations in two separate districts)
- Herat Province (two locations in two separate districts)
- Kabul Region (two locations in two separate provinces)

Among the areas, the districts, then villages were chosen according to similar criteria when available, and to particularities shown by the local key informants.

1 The scale of administrative divisions is particular in Afghanistan. In 2006, the country counted 34 provinces, divided into 398 districts. The estimated average number of households per district would then be around 10,000, falling to 8,000 in rural districts.
2 Source: CSO data taken from the last census, not yet publicly released.
3 Source: NRVA (National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment) database for 2005. This survey covered 30,822 households in the 398 Afghan districts.
1. Kabul Region

Map 5 – Northern Kabul Region

Variables
- Main ethnicity: Mixed (Tajik, Pashtun, Hazara).
- Conflict: Very high conflict in Kabul, Parwan and Panjsher during the last 10 years. Eastern zones of Kapisa are still unsafe (border with North Laghman).
- Development Index: Kabul: 4.5 to 8.2; Parwan: 2.0 to 6.9.
- Food Intake: Kabul: 0% to 28% of food deficit; Parwan: 0% to 25%.
- Poppy: Low to no cultivation.
- Migration history: large migration to Pakistan, Iran; early elite migration to Europe and the US; positive domestic migration to the capital, large number of returnees in Kabul and Parwan provinces.
- Donors’ assistance: relatively large.

Main Questions
The past wealth, the large tribute paid to the conflict, and the proximity with Kabul create a number of opportunities. What are the factors that prevent people from accessing these opportunities? Who accesses them? How does the reconstruction effort vary in different communities? What is the impact of the proximity to the city?
2. Nangarhar Province

Overall Situation: Nangarhar is located on the road from Kabul to Peshawar, Pakistan. This road is one of the country’s major transportation axes. The center of the province is well irrigated by structures that have been rehabilitated recently while adjacent valleys vary between quite well-off and extremely poor.

Variables

- Main ethnicity: Pashtuns, some Tajiks
- Conflict: High conflict during the communists, lower during the Mujahidin, some fighting during the Taliban. The situation has mostly settled since 2001, with still some small, localized conflicts (often linked to poppy issues).
- Development Index: District averages ranging from 4 to 7. Provincial average is 5.8.
- Food Intake: relatively good, but very variable in the districts. District averages range from 0% to 92% of households in food deficit.
- Poppy: Very important level of poppy cultivation up to 2004. Stopped in 2005, likely to have restarted in 2006.
- Migration history: Because of its situation on the Pakistan border, Nangarhar has extremely tight links with Peshawar. A large number of families still have members living in Peshawar and its area.
- Donors’ assistance: Nangarhar is one of the provinces benefiting from the largest “alternative livelihood” funds. This assistance is not spread out equally across all districts.

Questions
What is the impact of the proximity with Pakistan? How did the communities react to the drought? What was the impact of poppy cultivation and the recent ban? Who were the households who best switched to other activities?
3. Herat Province

**Overall Situation:** Herat is located along the western border with Iran and Turkmenistan. It has a longstanding relation with Iran and a relative protection from the conflicts allowed it to maintain a certain prosperity in the provincial capital and some of the districts.

- Main ethnicity: Mixed (Tajiks and Pashtuns)
- Conflict: Depending on the area, high conflict during the communists, lower during the Mujahidin, nearly none during the Taliban.
- Development Index: District averages ranging from 2.4 to 10. Provincial average is 5.
- Food Intake: low dietary diversity, and areas with large food deficit: estimated 3% to 79% of households in food deficit.
- Poppy: moderate level of cultivation.
- Migration history: Due to historical links and proximity with Iran, Herat province has a large migration across the border.
- Donors’ assistance: Herat Province is one of the few non-key provinces that receives a relatively large amount of donors’ assistance.

Questions
What is the impact of the proximity with Herat? With Iran? What are the specific family strategies concerning commuting or migration to Iran? What was the particular impact of the drought, the war, and who are the families who best coped with it? How is the relatively important economic development of the area shared among the households?
2. Community Case Studies

Note: These “community case studies” are the quick analysis of each community performed at the end of each of the six Community Synthesis Reports. They were extracted from the more descriptive Community Reports and placed side by side for better comparison.

The following indices were computed according to the methodology provided by the World Bank:

<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>#Steps</th>
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<th>PI</th>
<th>NPI</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>MOPI</th>
<th>SPI</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Rural</td>
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* Small number of households sorted

Table 31 – Summary Indices for the Communities

2.1. Dasht-e Barchi, Kabul

a. Description and History of the Community

This relatively recent community is an example of a dense, residential, suburban community, located on a large but not primary communication axis. It hosts a population that has been largely affected by the conflict, but was initially already vulnerable for different reasons.

Before the civil war, the area was mostly composed by Hazara recently arrived to the city from Ghazni and Panwan provinces, driven by the opportunities they thought the city would provide, and in some cases by a low access to agricultural land where they came from. They had little education, but enough capital to purchase a cheap house and start a business in the area. Driven by economic growth and the development of the city during the communist regime, businesses flourished, but for the main part reached only the stage of small, localized, family businesses, mostly in spare parts, metal recycling and carpet weaving.

The specific population and geographic position of the community made it a particular theater of the tanzim fights, with heavy and early fighting between opposed Hazara tanzims. The massive drawback in the local economy, repetitive destructions and killing, as well as enrolment of a part of the population in the factions ruined an economy that had just started to achieve some prosperity. The constant harassment of the Taliban, and their low inclination towards a sound economic management, the looting of property during their regime and the lack of communication and transport of goods brought the community further towards pauperization. Both events contributed to driving a large number of the residents to take refuge in Pakistan and Iran.

A majority of the refugees came back slowly in the last four years, often to find a series of difficult problems: land disputes, destroyed houses or shops, low levels of equipment and little help from the government or the international community, mostly focused on emergency issues (water supply, shelters).

Nowadays, the overall situation of this community is slowly improving, but remains very weak: a high level of unemployment, very low qualifications and capital, a large number of people living on
unstable, daily work, with low incomes create many difficulties for inhabitants of this area to be able to face an increasing cost of living. The fact that it is a suburban and residential community places it far from a growth driven by the restarting agriculture, commerce and construction sector. It is also located outside the high-priority zones for international aid.

This situation drives a number of people to try their chance again in expatriation, often returning to their host country during exile.

b. Factors of Movement

When trying to compare the different trajectories of the limited number of movers interviewed, and from open-ended discussions in the community, it appears that one of the main factors of movement in this community during the last ten years was the situation of the families before the conflict. The successful families before the conflict, even when they were touched, generally had the intellectual and moral resources (education, aptitude, skills, will) to recover faster and cope better with their losses.

With the war came a series of strategic choices for the households: should they take part in the tanzim fights or should they remain neutral? Should they chose exile, and if so, to Iran, to Pakistan, and at what point? Then, should they stay in refugee camps or try their chance, often illegally, outside? When was the right time to return?

A family who decided to stay, and transferred its assets to another part of Kabul momentarily, to then come back to the area as soon as possible avoided looting and benefited from an established position at the peak of the return of others from exile.

A more common case seems to be the one of people who chose to escape and had the opportunity to continue their activity with some kind of success in exile, building on some specific skill or knowledge, and probably in large part, on luck. They were able to save some money, and if they moved fast enough, could invest this money in restarting their activity when they came back to Kabul. On the other hand, most of the families interviewed in this community acknowledge that the constant migration they had to face impeded their cultural and social development and the education of their children.

Accession to property seems to be an important factor: the families who had a house or who could buy one, and even more efficiently, the families who had the possibility to purchase a shop seem to be in a better position: they do not have to bear the burden of an expensive rent.

Households receiving remittances from family members who live abroad (in UAE, Europe or the USA) are considered by a major part of the interviewees among the best off, even if they are in a state of dependence. A quick re-expatriation to the UAE after the return to Kabul proved a good move for one interviewed family.

Finally, the surest method of recovery for many families is hard work, involving all available members –women, children when needed – and sound domestic economic management. Many deplore the lack of access to credit at low interest rates: in their opinion, being able to start a business quickly would have helped them to recover faster. But globally, the population from this community is nevertheless happy to have the security conditions necessary to start slowly rebuilding their life. If the present is not bright, they expect a lot from the future, particularly from the education of their children: their hopes for prosperity rely on the next generation.

c. Conclusion and Limitations

This community is an example of a suburban pauperization phenomenon common to many capitals in developing countries. It is starting to attract a number of people from the provinces, who seek cheap housing and the proximity to the city where they think they can find work opportunities. It also attracts people who had to leave their house or shop because of the increasing cost of housing in neighborhoods nearer to the city center. On the other hand, traditional inhabitants are starting to leave the community to seek better opportunities abroad.
The specific situation of the community might create a particular bias: of the families who inhabited the area ten years ago, the ones that are currently the best off are probably not living there anymore. Either they stayed in Pakistan, where they were able to construct a more solid life than the ones who have returned, or they returned to their agricultural land, or, finally, they were rich enough to move to other areas of the city. This area is not very attractive to the best off families unless it is the site of the family home.
2.2. Dasht-e Rabat, Parwan

a. Description and History of the Community

This community’s history and current status can be explained by its geographical situation, located in the Shamali Plain, one hour drive to the North of Kabul. For a long time, this plain has been one of the most productive agricultural areas in the country, producing one of the main Afghan exports: raisins. Thus, it used to be quite wealthy. Located on the road to Panjsher and to the Salang tunnel, leading to the rich Turkestan plains, it benefited from the proximity of all the main trade centers for this activity (e.g. Kabul, Kunduz, Mazar-e Sharif). This village and its fields were actually regained on the dry-lands by the Karmal government development effort in 1978.

Its situation made this area particularly strategic during the various conflicts involving the Mujahidin and resulted in transforming the fertile plain into a battlefield, turning the fields into wasteland and leading to the eviction of many of its residents. The Shamali Plain became one of the most heavily mined areas of the country. “The Shamali Plain behind the old Taliban lines is a wasteland of shriveled vineyards, wrecked houses, and broken military equipment.”

The largest part of the village had to migrate in 1999 to Kashmir, Pakistan, where they regrouped with some members who had left when the Taliban destroyed the main irrigation structures. Their living conditions were extremely difficult at that time, but it is quite remarkable that a major part of the village migrated together. From there, people started returning in 2002 and later, depending on the status of their land and their own feelings about the situation.

After the Taliban ouster, the Shamali Plain naturally became a focus of reconstruction efforts because of its high level of destruction, its proximity to the capital and its large economic potential. The aid first targeted solutions to an emergency situation: demining, preparation of shelters for the returnees, distribution of seeds and fertilizers. The development phase followed, with school building, reconstruction of irrigation structures, elaboration of new village institutions and community-based decision processes. It was difficult for the interviewers to make a complete list of all the help initiatives in this village: every new interview conducted in this village mentioned an aid program not discussed by other interviewees.

The village is now well on its track to a restored livelihood. Most of the villagers acknowledge that the work done was particularly helpful, and estimate that the pre-war level of production can be attained in about five to seven years. The chief of the community is particularly aware of what needs to be done in order to cleverly secure more help for his community (during our interview, he asked us if we could mention the community’s name to a particular person working for the French agricultural cooperation in this area and helping agricultural cooperatives, which shows a high level of awareness and realism regarding these kinds of processes).

b. Factors of Movement

The history of the village taken as a whole highlights evident factors of movement: the resistance against the Soviets and the civil war, while involving some of the villagers, did not have a major impact on the village’s livelihoods in general. With a few exceptions, the villagers put up with the small conflicts and even found some source of income in smuggling weapons.

An interesting part of the history of the village is the common migration: while they did not necessarily have strong family links, about half of the families decided to go to the same place. It does not seem that this collective migration was extremely fruitful, as most of the villagers keep bitter memories of this time, but it shows an interesting capacity of the villagers to collaborate and stay together.

This capacity proved fruitful later on. The main factor of improvement at the village level is, according to all, the capacity of the village to draw and keep the attention of the international aid. The common

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1 Andrew Maykuth, November 2001
decision to stop poppy cultivation, maybe asked for by the international actors, to undergo the DDR\(^1\) process, as well as the success of NSP and other village institutions, and the recent rehabilitation of the roads, without any outside help, proved that the villagers could organize themselves for their community's sake.

At the household level, it is difficult to find patterns that would differentiate the attitude of families during the conflicts and lead to differences in progress. One such reason would certainly be the initial differences in land ownership and wealth: the families who had some land they could sell during the conflict were definitely more able to get a new start than the ones who lost everything. Another reason is the family structure and the age of the children: having grown-up children who can work and bring some extra income to the family is, at some points, essential.

An interviewee mentioned that the fact that he had two oxen when he arrived in Panjsher and that his sons were slightly older than another person's made the whole difference between them: he could work in the fields in Panjsher, earn some money, then start earlier to rebuild his house with his sons, and now owns some land whereas the other one does not. Slight differences at some specific time can make a significant difference after the war.

It seems that among the villagers in exile in Pakistan, the ones who had a certain skill that they could exert, like masonry, were able to get along better, and to even improve their skills. The migration seems to have been more fruitful for skilled workers than for farmers.

The question of whether the involvement in the tanzims conflict or along the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, proved fruitful, remains unclear. Some people in the village took arms with the Northern Alliance before the Taliban decided to evacuate the village, and they are those who remained in Panjsher and fighting throughout the war. As former Mujahidin, they certainly benefit from a certain respect and good reputation among the villagers and probably kept some useful connections. But the chief of the village, who was among them, showed that connections could not help him give the villagers access to the Bagram airbase work opportunities.

Another interviewee explained that when the Jamiat party took over the area, he preferred to leave, since he was deeply engaged with the Hezb-e Islami. He was sent by his party to fight in the conflict opposing Azerbaijan and Armenia, but when the Hezb-e Islami could not provide him anymore with such opportunities, he lost his main source of income.

c. Conclusion & Limitations

This community is a somewhat radical example of a rural community extremely affected by the war and benefiting to a large extent from international aid. It can be considered an amplified example of many such communities in Afghanistan. One of the most interesting features is the important unity of the village, which certainly helped its villagers to get maximum benefits from the international aid.

In this way, it is quite the opposite from the Kabul suburb studied previously: while both are relatively recent settlements, located close to Kabul, who suffered intensely from the conflict, one was helped heavily, and not the other. One is on its way to recovery, and one may be on its way to an increasing pauperization.

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\(^1\) DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. The process aimed at demobilizing militia and collecting weapons, in exchange of work opportunities for some, and money (about US$ 700) for the others.
2.3. Sultanpur-e Sufla, Nangarhar

a. Description and History of the Community

This community has a mainly agricultural history: located along a stream and springs, it used to be a quite productive area, providing for the needs of the whole village, even if the available surface of irrigated land was rather small.

The first trauma which affected the community, the conflict between the Soviet regime and the Mujahidin, marks the first of a series of events that led a number of people in the community to poverty. Three generations have suffered the violence and the psychological stress of losing all their property and seeing members of their families killed or injured.

The first conflict triggered a migration to Pakistan for large numbers of inhabitants: like the best part of the 6 million Afghans who migrated between 1979 and 1992, people from Sultanpur-e Sufla were confined in overcrowded camps, with no privacy or comfort. This situation was more difficult for women than for men: women were supposed to respect their Afghan tradition and behavior, which was not easy under these conditions.

The return from migration occurred for the most part in 1992. The villagers found at that time a very good opportunity to earn money and rebuild their houses through poppy cultivation. A traditional occupation in the area, poppy saw a surge in its farm-gate price in 1992, which provided extra benefits to the farmers and accelerated the reconstruction. Opium traffickers proved also to be helpful due to their capacity to easily provide credit to farmers. This blessed period for the community lasted for 6 to 7 years, until the first effects of the drought appeared.

The drought started in 1998 for Sultanpur-e Sufla villagers, and reached its most dramatic peak between 2002 and the spring of 2004. It dried the main water-tables in the Spin Ghar mountains that fed the Surkh Rod River, as well as the ones feeding the springs near the village. While precipitations returned in the spring of 2004, and mostly in 2005, they have not yet sufficed to refill these water-tables and the villagers still suffer from the consequences of the drought.

Another key event for the community is the ban the government decided to place on poppy cultivation. This ban was promulgated in 2002, but was not enforced until 2004, and more particularly in 2005. During that year only, the total area cultivated in poppy in Nangarhar Province dropped by more than 90%. While poppy was (and is) still grown in some remote districts, the proximity to Jalalabad and the visibility of the village's fields prevents Sultanpur-e Sufla to continue this activity. Former farmers then turned to alternative activities at the recently re-established brick factories near the village, in Jalalabad, or in Pakistan, creating a mutation by necessity of the economic structure of the village.

In the last four years, no major development program seems to have been conducted by NGOs in this village, but NSP started in 2005. Elections for CDCs have been conducted but no project has started yet. The most appreciated reconstruction projects are related to the creation of a school and the enlargement of drinking water facilities.

Nevertheless, Nangarhar is among the key priority provinces for alternative livelihoods programs, and a very large, USAID-sponsored program, aiming at redeveloping the agriculture sector in Nangarhar, is currently being launched in the whole province. Since Surkh Rod is extremely near to the province center, it is likely that the program will reach it in the coming months. The villagers seemed, however, unaware of this.

But for now, the villagers feel they are abandoned by the government, which first cut their major income source, and then did not pay any attention to their problems. Most of the wells built by NGOs have recently dried out and diseases associated with unclean water have increased in the last year, particularly affecting children, who suffer from diarrhea and diphtheria. The young generation is very disappointed by the non-fulfillment of the government's promises.
b. Main Factors of Movement

In a village where stresses have been so important, and have resulted in putting most of the villagers under the community-perceived poverty line, strategies for movement are usually closer to coping strategies. Migration to Pakistan, opportunism in employment, diversification of activities, poppy cultivation are to be counted among the successful coping strategies observed in this village.

Among the families who were less touched by the various events come in first position the ones who have traditionally had a non-farming activity. They were, quite logically, far less affected by the drought and the ban on poppy than families who depended on farming activities. It is interesting to note that for the most, they were the people who had little or no access to land before the migration.

Among the movers were people who learnt a profession in exile. They were able to make use of these newly acquired skills when they came back, either in Jalaabad or directly in the village. Again, their lesser dependence on agriculture sheltered them from the major losses suffered by the rest of the village.

Economic diversity proved, for the ones who could practice it, a successful way of moving: they profited from the agricultural income, while securing a salary or an extra income from another activity in the provincial capital. Generally, the proximity with Jalaabad allows quick commuting and the multiplication of activities.

The attention paid to the education of their children already proved a good strategy for the families who could afford this more than 15 years ago: their children are now earning good incomes in the city and the family benefits from these.

For others, the migration of one or several members of the family to Pakistan is usually considered a good move. Even if they do not earn a lot, this small income usually leaves room for small remittances to send to the family, the cost of living being lower on the other side of the border. Semi-permanent expatriation and seasonal migration to Pakistan are often observed among the community members.

For all the interviewees, working hard and involving all the family – male children helping their fathers and female children helping their mothers – seems to be another way to cope with difficulties, and for the luckiest, to move out of poverty.

c. The Question of Opium Money

One main interrogation lays in the rapidity with which families who were successfully involved in poppy cultivation collapsed through the drought: they had six to seven years, probably more, until 2004, to collect large benefits from this activity. Why, then, is such a large part of the village classified as poor? Several factors have to be explored:

First of all, for the majority, opium revenue was not exceedingly high: a rough estimate would put the gross revenue of opium production for farmers at about US$ 220 / month / family, taking rather optimistic figures, and considering the relatively small amount of land usually owned by the families in this community. This obviously concerns only the farmers who actually own land, while employees would have to content themselves with only a fraction of this amount. If this amount is still quite high compared to the average incomes in Afghanistan, it does not allow much room for luxury – nor savings.

Furthermore, it is likely that in the first years, at least, the best part of the income not directly consumed by the family was invested in the repairs necessary to compensate the destruction caused by the war.

\[1\] Taking the average values for the whole country observed by UNODC in 2005: yield: 39 kg/ha; farm-gate price: US$ 102 /kg. The value given is the gross income, computed for a family cultivating opium on 2 jeribs (0.4 ha) and producing two yields of poppy / year. This value is quite optimistic: most of the families would have produced opium on a smaller part of their land, the prices were probably lower in 1992-2000 than in 2005, etc.
It seems then, under these conditions, that people did not have much room for savings, except the most successful among the farmers, and the ones who did not have much to pay – either in repairs or to maintain their family. Even among these, it seems that a small saving capacity endangered their future livelihoods. It was mentioned by several that when they had money, they spent it without thinking about the future. This explains the emphasis put in the Ladder of Life on the capacity to save money now.

d. Conclusion

This community relied heavily on poppy cultivation to recover faster from the deleterious effects of the conflict and a non-voluntary, often unsuccessful migration. While it seemed the best thing to do at the time, the current situation proves that this strategy was far from the best: most of the successful villagers are, nowadays, involved in other sectors than agriculture, sometimes keeping their fields as a source of supplementary income.

This current strategy seems to be spreading to the rest of the village, showing a slow, forced transition to off-farm activities. This transition leads to substantial improvements but is heavily dependent on the capacity of the households to find non-farm employment, mainly in Jalalabad, thus on their level of education as well as their capacity to commute there (most of them cannot afford the higher cost of living in Jalalabad).

The continuing lack of irrigation water leads to a low productivity, too low to present any problem of marketing for the village’s production. If the village benefits from better access to water, it will take a long time to develop enough production of cash crops to provide an income even remotely comparable to that of opium. The switch to non-farm activities is thus likely to be continued in the next years.

Even if most of this community is in a frail position, the villagers seem to be happy to be able to live in a safe environment, and they show hopeful expectations for the future. They rely on the next generation for their future well-being; in the meantime, they expect international organizations and the government to help them solve their problems with water.

2.4. Padaw, Nangarhar

a. Description and History of the Community

Padaw is a community that could be among the most successful in its province: it has a good climate, no problem with irrigation, an amount of arable land available per farming family far larger than any other district of Nangarhar; it is located on the main, newly paved, road from Jalalabad to the Turkham border, offering good opportunities for trade and easy access to wholesale markets in Afghanistan (Jalalabad) and Pakistan (Peshawar).

The community has known heavy conflict, with has had a significant impact on it, and important migration of its inhabitants to the nearby refugee camps in Pakistan, but this situation was ended in 1992, and the villagers were able to return safely to their homes. The tanzim fights and the Taliban regime affected the community to a lesser degree than many other visited villages.

The drought which had a disastrous impact on most areas of Afghanistan did not affect the community; on the contrary, the local farmers could still produce while large numbers of farmers in Nangarhar had to stop or drastically reduce their production: this gave a comparative advantage to Padaw farmers. Poppy cultivation and opium trade have been, for at least ten years, the principal resource of the community.

b. Factors of Movement

In the last ten years, the community as a whole has benefited from three essential factors of movement: the surge in farm-gate poppy prices in their area, the proximity with markets and the continued irrigation throughout the drought.
For the interviewees who grew poppy, its income led to a large increase in their families’ well being. This is translated in a diminution in the number of poor in the village, compared to ten years ago (in the male household sorting).

Nevertheless, the male sorting also acknowledges a diminution in the number of rich households. This is explained by the high dependence of some of the farmers on poppy cultivation, and their lack of alternative when poppy was banned from their fields. The richest in the community include people who took advantage of the poppy income to invest in another activity: some purchased a car or a truck and are earning the essential part of their income from the transportation business; others opened shops in Jalalabad; most have some trading activity between Peshawar or Turkham and Jalalabad. The majority of movers keep their fields to provide them only with a supplementary income.

People who stayed poor between 1996 and 2006 were essentially the people who did not benefit from poppy income, or at too low a level to allow their progress. This is the case mostly of people who did not have access to land or who were already extremely poor (widows, beggars).

c. Conclusion & Limitations

This community shows the consequences of a large dependence on a single source of income and the slow recovery that took place when this source disappeared. As in Sultanpur-e Sufia, the best strategy lies in diversification. A major difference between the two communities resides in the far better conditions experienced in Padaw compared to Sultanpur. Padaw can be said to be gifted and can be taken as the ideal-type of villages there could be in Nangarhar if there was enough irrigation and roads for all.

If the complaints of the farmers about the ban on poppy, their insistence on their need for external help and their constant threat to restart poppy cultivation (not very convincing, since their fields are exceedingly exposed to eradication, and their land mostly belongs to the government) are set aside, there remains the fact that the agricultural income does not seem to suffice, or at least to satisfy the villagers. This might be because the main cultures are low-income cash crops (cereals and vegetables). This could then be changed by future programs encouraging agricultural extension, improved seeds selection and other productivity enhancement measures.

Nevertheless, the feeling that remains from this village is that more than a large part of its inhabitants have experienced another life with the income from poppy. This has given them access to
“luxury items” (in their words) and the return to a lower income leaves them disappointed. This village probably already entered a transitory phase of exit from agriculture, which is likely to increase in the coming years.

2.5. Qala-e Reg, Herat

a. Description and History of the Community

Qala-e Reg is a typical rural community in Herat Province, which used to get a low but sufficient income from agriculture and silk production, then lost most of it during the war between the Mujahidin and the Soviet troops and the communist regime. These sources of livelihood were further affected by the low level of activity during the Taliban period, then by the drought.

Qala-e Reg seems to be already on a path to recovery. The renewed peace and stability as well as a better weather have created a better environment for the province as a whole. While they slowed down, trade activities never really stopped in Herat during the Taliban regime, and the province could be considered a kind of pocket of stability, when compared with other Afghan provinces.

The province nowadays benefits from a quicker restart than most, and Qala-e Reg partly benefits from this. The connection of the community to the power grid provided by Iran is one of the symptoms of this, and a factor of development at the village level. The interviewees considered most of the villagers to be above the community-perceived poverty line.

Youth unemployment and the lack of water remain two of the main problems affecting the traditional livelihoods and the prosperity of the community.

Several projects in this community were implemented under NSP (National Solidarity Program). The creation of several shuras (men, women and youth) has established tight relations among villagers. Women and youth seem very pleased with the councils because their voices and opinion are listened to.

b. Proximity with Iran

Seasonal migration to Iran used to be very common but is nowadays becoming more difficult and less attractive than it used to be: work visas are more difficult to obtain and the border has become tighter, impeding illegal immigration; the high exchange rate of the Afghani compared to the Toman as well as the high cost of living in Afghanistan compared to Iran make it less attractive to migrate in order to send remittances to the family.

Still, seasonal migration can be observed relatively often. It usually takes place in winter, when there is no agricultural work to be done in the village. In Iran, men work in construction, in well digging, as agricultural laborers, and to a lesser extent as drivers, carpenters, masons, plumbers, etc.

The proximity with Iran also has an effect on trade: some villagers go to Iran to buy products and sell them at the Herat bazaar.

Most of the women did not enjoy their stay in Iran as refugees: there, they were obliged to prove that they could be “good Muslims and better Afghans.” Some women learnt carpet weaving there but most did not work because it was shameful for women to be the family breadwinner. Back in the village, most of them now work in the community as tailors, in the fields, or produce silk.

On the other hand, adolescent girls, who grew up in Iran and were educated there, have more problems getting used to a rural environment they barely knew before the migration: for instance, it is hard in the village for women to study up to twelfth grade, and this creates a problem for the girls who want to study and become professionals.
c. Factors of Movement

The families who dealt the best with the war and the drought include many with few and educated members: they were able to find better employment abroad, their wives were able to work, and thus the families benefited from an extra income with less family charges. They are the ones who usually could get employment with the aid agencies upon their return.

Factors of significant movement are also linked to successful and sometimes illegal activities. Trade between Iran and Herat proves to be profitable; smuggling of people from Afghanistan to Iran also used to be a very profitable activity.

Migration to Iran is nowadays profitable only for those who have good relations and a good work record there: they can secure higher salaries, and thus make it interesting to go there and send remittances to Afghanistan. The poor and unskilled find the visa too expensive and the income too low when converted in Afghans.

As in other communities visited, villagers with more than one activity (for instance, working in the government and in the fields) have more chances to be movers. On the other hand, skilled people, working as carpenters or plumbers, have naturally recovered faster after the conflict, and are more able to cope with the lasting effects of the drought.

A new sort of activities has recently appeared in the community, brought with the connection to the power grid: welders, metal workers and electricians are now able to work here, rather than commute to Herat.

A striking fact in the Ladder of Life is that disabled people, usually put on the first step in other villages, are here slightly higher on the scale. A small help from Handicap International allowed them to progress, and to secure a better future.

During the Taliban regime, Handicap International came and gave loans to disabled people. The loans were of around 1,000 AFA. People bought several sheep for very cheap prices, about 200 or 300 AFA per sheep. Abdul fattah is a disabled man and he got 30,000 AFA and started a small shop in the community. Now he has improved his small shop and makes some savings to buy more products for his shop. –Khan Bibi, female, housewife, 60, LFPD

d. Conclusion

Herat Province was one of the first major battlegrounds during the Soviet invasion. The role of the Mujahidin Ismail Khan1 as one of the resisters against the Soviet is still remembered in the community as a symbol of identity. The Herat/Iran border is now very active and a source of lucrative business.

This community, located forty kilometers from Herat and one hundred kilometers from Iran, benefits from this: the proximity of both places has helped some families to prosper by importing and selling Iranian products in the bazaar, and the connection to the power grid is likely to bring major changes in the local economy, switching the environment from mostly agricultural to more mixed livelihoods.

Overall, the community is (in the opinion of its elders) more prosperous than ten years ago and will be more prosperous in the future.

2.6. Kunjan, Herat

a. Description and History of the Community

Kunjan is a green, peri-urban community located near Herat Airport, with many trees and gardens. It

1 Ismail Khan was Governor of Herat Province for a number of years. His ability to change sides, his military power and his good relations with Iran, have somewhat preserved the province from the worst of the conflicts, and enabled it to develop successfully. He stopped being a governor to join the government in Kabul in 2004.
is a medium size community of 200 families, growing in size due to its proximity to Herat. Villagers prefer to live there than in the city, because the cost of living is less expensive.

Its strategic geographic situation proved to be problematic during the fighting between the Mujahidin and the Soviet troops as well as the Communist regime: the village was under heavy fire, pushing its inhabitants to migrate to Iran, from 1979 to 1991. During these years, the village was almost empty and everything was destroyed.

Nowadays, the same strategic situation benefits the village. It has prospered in the last ten years thanks to its proximity to the provincial capital, one of the most important trade centers in Afghanistan. People often go to the city to work and trade. The community now appears very organized, with a high level of unity between Pashtun and Tajik communities. It is led by an elected leader and male and female shuras, both created through NSP. An association for youth is also present in the community. These organizations seem to work well and people participate actively in the improvement of the community.

The community’s economy remains centered on agriculture although there is a large switch towards off-farm activities, essentially due to the drought – water is still a problem for farmers – and the presence of new, nearby work opportunities.

b. Factors of Movement

Mid-term or seasonal migration to Iran has proved to be a successful strategy in the past ten years. For a long period of time, Iran provided interesting work opportunities and salaries that could allow households to save money and prepare their return. As in the other communities visited, people usually took advantage of their time abroad to learn skills which gave them better opportunities upon their return.

Seasonal work is still common but less frequent than a few years ago. If ten years ago, Iran was still a place to go to in order to find work and to save money, nowadays, young people prefer to go to Herat or Kabul. Several things attract them: it is easier to find a job there, salaries are higher, the exchange rate is not a problem, no visa is required whereas a visa to Iran is expensive and difficult to obtain.

While agricultural development has been positive, it has been too limited to allow most of the community to prosper in its traditional activity. Problems such as the lack of cold storage, the high prices of inputs, and the limited efficiency of seeds and fertilizers make this activity less profitable and push farmers to find other activities.

Farming is going to disappear because there is a shortage of water and fertilizers are very expensive. – Conflict Timeline, Kunjan, Herat

Economic diversity is thus quite frequent, and a successful strategy to increase the households’ incomes. Nowadays, more and more farmers cultivate the land only as a subsidiary occupation. They find, in Herat, and more particularly in the nearby industrial park, good employment opportunities, which profit greatly to the landless and unskilled.

Women’s work is, as usual, limited to small tasks in the fields or at home. In Kunjan, women often transform agricultural products (making jams and juices) to sell them to the bazaar, thus providing a supplementary income to the household. The possibility for women to work outside the house or the village is still limited to the most educated families.

c. Conclusions

The proximity to the city and the fertile land makes Kunjan slightly different from other parts of Herat. The people of this community are active and enterprising. The number of literate women is higher than in other communities and they have a very active role.

On the other hand, people of Kunjan express an important dependency on external help. They expect
the central government to solve their problems, but at the same time they do not trust national politicians.

In general, women see the future of the community and of the country more positively and optimistically than the men do. If the Taliban period was difficult for men and women, women suffered more. However, men are more pessimistic because they do not perceive significant progress, they think that the economy is not improving, and they fear for the future.

Education is one of the most repeated words in the interviews. With good education, men and women both think they will have better politicians, better democracy, and better employment opportunities.
3. Indicative Country Timeline

In this timeline are provided the events cited by the interviewees during the field research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Aug. 19</td>
<td>Third Anglo-Afghan War and independence for Afghanistan from Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td></td>
<td>Amanullah Khan self-proclaimed king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td></td>
<td>Amanullah Khan flees. Prince Nadir Khan declared king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nadir Shah assassinated. His son, Zahir Shah succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td></td>
<td>General Mohammad Daud becomes prime minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daud is forced to resign as prime minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zahir Shah is deposed in a coup by Daud, who declares a republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loya Jirga declares Daud President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daud is overthrown and killed. Power struggle between leftist leaders Amin and Taraki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
<td>Amin wins but Soviet Union sends in troops (thousands land in Kabul on December 24). Amin executed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported by Soviet troops, Babrak Karmal, leader of the People’s Democratic Party (PDPA), is installed as a ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mujahidin alliance formed in Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td></td>
<td>Babrak Karmal is replaced by Doctor Najibullah as head of PDPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Najibullah becomes president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
<td>Geneva Peace Accords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Feb. 15</td>
<td>Soviet troops leave Afghanistan. The Mujahidin fight attempt to overthrow Najibullah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>Northern Alliance is formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ahmad Shah Massoud enters Kabul with the Northern Alliance, defeating Najibullah’s regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Burhanuddin Rabbani proclaimed president. Government excludes Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who launches massive rocket attacks on Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>An estimated 25,000 people killed in Kabul, victims of the faction fighting (Dostum and Hekmatyar against Rabbani government). Taliban movement starts forming in a small village between Lashkar Gah and Kandahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>Taliban militia force President Rabbani and his government out of Kabul. After the capture of Kabul, the Taliban execute Najibullah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recognize Taliban regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taliban take Mazar-e Sharif (August) and Bamyan. Massive Hazara killings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>UN sanctions imposed on Taliban regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tighter regime of sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Taliban blow up Buddha statues in Bamyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance, assassinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Attacks on Washington and New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Coalition air strikes begin on Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Nov. 13</td>
<td>Taliban flee Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Dec. 22</td>
<td>Bonn Peace Agreement. Hamid Karzai becomes chairman of Interim Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>Official ban on opium poppy cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>Britain establishes ISAF peacekeeping forces and hands control over to Turkey in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Loya Jirga chooses new government. Hamid Karzai becomes president. King Zahir Shah becomes ‘Father of the Nation’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>Karzai escapes assassination attempt in Kandaharan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>Germany and Netherlands have command of ISAF. NATO will take command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Jan-Feb</td>
<td>Afghanistan Compact, London Conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Acronyms and Glossary

Acronym Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANDS</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistical Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAG</td>
<td>Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoA</td>
<td>Government of Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRVA</td>
<td>National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>UN Office of Drugs and Crime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFA</td>
<td>Afghani - the Afghan currency. 50 AFA ~ US$ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerib</td>
<td>A surface measurement representing 1/5 of hectare, thus 2,000 square meters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malek</td>
<td>Chief of the village - also named arbab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser</td>
<td>A weight measurement, usually representing 7 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shura</td>
<td>Council (of elders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzims</td>
<td>The mujahidin political parties created during the civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakil</td>
<td>The chief of a neighborhood, mostly in cities</td>
</tr>
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