

## Human Rights Dimension of Poverty in Afghanistan



**UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

*Kabul, March 2010*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

OHCHR wishes to thank its national and international human rights field colleagues for their dedication and commitment throughout this project. It was their work that helped inform the direction of the report and brought to the fore the voices behind the stark facts and figures of poverty in Afghanistan. Special thanks to the Human Rights and Poverty team who have labored diligently on this report and related research. OHCHR also wishes to acknowledge the many people who took time to participate in the interviews and to share their views and thoughts, without which this report would not have been possible.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abject poverty remains widespread; it is closely related to inequality and frequently accompanied by a sense of powerlessness and exclusion.<sup>1</sup> Add conflict to the mix, and addressing poverty becomes an even greater challenge. This is the situation in Afghanistan. Poverty, and its multiple ramifications, scars the lives of millions of Afghans. As elsewhere, poverty is multi-dimensional and can be traced to different sources and processes. Poverty is neither accidental, nor inevitable in Afghanistan: it is both a cause and consequence of a massive human rights deficit including widespread impunity and inadequate investment in, and attention to, human rights. This report is concerned with the human rights dimension of poverty while acknowledging that many other factors determine who is poor or prosperous. It argues that poverty reduction initiatives should benefit from a human rights perspective and standards to help meet the objective of assisting those who are most marginalized, and the least able to enjoy the essentials for a dignified life, such as the right to food, health, access to justice, shelter and education. The sustainable reduction of poverty in Afghanistan is contingent on efforts that roll back abusive power structures as well as the ability of the poor to make free and informed choices. It is no less important that there are transparent and accountable decision-making processes, that Afghans regain their trust in public institutions, and live in a secure environment.

The ouster of the Taliban regime coupled with renewed international interest in the region, unclouded by the dynamic of the Cold War, led Afghans to believe that life would be better and Afghanistan would move out of the lower rungs of the world's socio-economic indicators. But, eight years after the Bonn Agreement promised a new beginning for Afghanistan, one in three Afghans lives in absolute poverty and cannot meet his or her basic needs; another third of the Afghan population lives slightly above the poverty line, which makes them extremely vulnerable to any adverse event, such as drought, floods, earthquakes or a near-by health facility running out of medication.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), launched in 2008 and serving as the country's poverty reduction strategy, identifies a number of factors which contribute to poverty including "lack of infrastructure, limited access to markets, social inequity, historical and ongoing conflict, and various productivity constraints."<sup>2</sup> A study that was used to inform the ANDS also found that the key determinants of poverty were "(i) a weak assets base, (ii) ineffective institutions: including the disabling economic environment; weak regional governance, service delivery and corruption; weak social protection programming; social inequalities; and (iii) vulnerability to: conflict, natural disasters; decreasing rule of law; increasing basic costs; increasing population; food insecurity; winterization; and iv) diverse livelihoods."<sup>3</sup>

Abuse of power is a key driver of poverty in Afghanistan. Vested interests frequently shape the public agenda, whether in relation to the law, policy, or the allocation of resources. This report argues that the Government is often unable to deliver basic services, such as security, food, or shelter. Widespread corruption further limits access to services for a large proportion of the population. In addition, many Afghans perceive international actors as primarily interested in short-term objectives rather than challenging entrenched and abusive power structures. Afghans are acutely conscious that opportunities have been squandered with immediate, as well as long-term, ramifications. This has reinforced a strong sense of disillusionment and growing

skepticism about the future of the democratization process among a wide swathe of Afghan society.

In addition, cultural norms exacerbate discriminatory practices particularly in relation to women. Few Afghans, and especially the poor, participate in, or influence, decisions that have major consequences for their security and well-being. Numerous decisions are made in *fora* and policy circles beyond Afghanistan and are often geared to meet short-term objectives that have little to do with the safety and best interests of impoverished Afghans. Reconstruction and stabilization efforts do not necessarily seek to respond to the development needs that have been identified by concerned communities. Political and military, and at times personal, agendas override the public interest.

The intensification and spread of the armed conflict in recent years has increased insecurity and exacerbated poverty. Insecurity dominates policy discussions and funding decisions, neglecting the importance of social and economic security that is central to establishing stability and a just and lasting peace. The disproportionate allocation of funds to insecure areas at the expense of relatively stable areas has added to the disillusionment of a growing number of Afghans in the Government and its international partners.

Poverty is both a cause and consequence of the exclusion and discrimination suffered by the vast majority of Afghans. But some – landless, Kuchi, persons with disabilities and women – are disproportionately affected. Migration and the borrowing of money are amongst the few coping mechanisms that exist in Afghanistan.

The report concludes that an effective approach to the reduction of poverty requires a broad understanding of chronic and profound impoverishment that should not be seen only as a lack of income but also as a deprivation of human rights. In other words, poverty reduction strategies must focus on the root causes of poverty, in addition to addressing the consequences. This report examines poverty from different human rights angles including how abusive structures of power and entrenched discriminatory practices inhibit the poor from accessing opportunities that would allow them to overcome poverty. The report also examines how decisions that lead to inequitable allocations of resources are made and how insecurity compounds the conditions that give rise to, or sustain, poverty.

### ***Human Rights: Added Value in Poverty Reduction***

Poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon that, in the Afghan context, has significant ramifications for the survival and well-being of a high proportion of the population. The structural circumstances in which poverty occurs and persists, have a profound relationship to levels of compliance with international human rights norms. International human rights law defines poverty “as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights”.<sup>\*</sup> This definition incorporates notions of choice, vulnerability and participation in processes that affect the lives of concerned individuals and communities. These elements are interrelated and interdependent, necessitating a holistic approach. This, in effect, means that it is unrealistic to attempt to curb poverty in isolation to efforts designed to tackle abusive structures and institutions of power, that it is necessary to expand the choices available to the poor, and to include them in socio-economic assessment, implementation, and evaluation processes. It is equally important that resources are allocated equitably and that the security concerns of Afghans are addressed.

Poverty is neither accidental nor inevitable but in Afghanistan, it reflects the way society is organized, the way decisions – including by the international community – are taken and resources allocated. In this respect, the report aims at a complementary approach to current poverty reduction planning and implementation processes. In particular, it argues that economic growth or the promotion of individual income-generating activities will not in isolation alleviate the dire levels of poverty. As elaborated further in Annex II, diverse measures, ranging from empowering the poor, meaningful participation in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of poverty reduction strategies to transparent mechanisms to hold accountable decision-makers, are essential to poverty reduction and its eventual elimination.

Poverty reduction policies and strategies must address the root causes of poverty, and not focus only on consequences such as ill-health and food insecurity. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) does not fully reflect the relationship between human rights and development, as most of the benchmarks in the Strategy relate to civil and political rights. This report uses a human rights framework to analyse the multiple, complex, and underlying causes of poverty. This framework is focused on issues of power, resource allocation, choice, security, and deprivation. The use of a human rights lens to examine poverty helps ensure a people-centered approach that identifies differences between groups or circumstances and the debilitating conditions that deny individuals and communities the possibility of climbing out of poverty and enjoying their fundamental human rights.

<sup>\*</sup>United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, Statement 2001, E/C.12/2001/10, para 8.

## I. Afghanistan: Poverty in Context

**A Historical Perspective:** The last three decades of armed conflict have exacerbated poverty and impeded efforts geared to its reduction. Armed conflict is one of many reasons why one-third of Afghans live in absolute poverty with, another 37 per cent of poor people hovering on the edge.<sup>4</sup> The dire state of poverty that characterizes and constrains the lives of a huge proportion of the Afghan people largely reflects the socio-economic and political dynamics, and related development deficits, of the last two centuries. Within the region, Afghanistan has historically been comparatively worse off for a range of reasons including geography, natural and human resource deficits, and lack of economic opportunities. The nature of the ruling systems—often subject to regional and international political pressure—generally remained autocratic and conservative and failed to support initiatives that could have improved the living standards of Afghans.

Although poverty was a common feature throughout the sub-region until the 1970s, many neighbouring countries were already a step ahead of Afghanistan in terms of economic growth and poverty levels. For instance, regional human development indices from the 1970s estimate Afghanistan's maternal mortality rate was 3,070 out of 100,000 live births<sup>5</sup> while maternal mortality rates in Iran and Pakistan were some 90 and 75 per cent less, respectively.

Afghanistan has a long history of weak central Government unable to extend its reach to all corners of the country. There was limited investment to address the challenges and opportunities inherent in Afghanistan's landlocked status, rugged and mountainous geography, or the efficient management of scarce natural resources (such as land and water manageable for irrigation). The lack of investment in communication and transportation routes maintained a physical disconnect between people thereby magnifying distance and differences between communities. Furthermore, there was limited investment in capacity, including in terms of human resources, to address economic and social challenges. The central Government used informal structures, such as tribal and other local leadership mechanisms, to maintain social order in hard-to-reach areas.

Afghan leaders have historically relied on external support to take initiatives towards modernization and economic expansion, although these initiatives were not well received by the public. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century rulers, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and Amir Habibullah Khan, relied largely on foreign aid to support their rule, including intended socio-economic development. Later, the British Government urged King Nadir Shah not to formalize any cooperation with Russia in return for financial support. As is the case today, the countries providing aid had their own agendas (targeting specific regions with specific goals, specific ethnic groups and so forth) which shaped decision-making in Kabul.

Afghanistan's geographical location and regional politics meant that it was frequently a geo-political pawn. The country operated as a political buffer between the British and Russia throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and played a similar role during the Cold War. Interference from foreign powers has been and remains a common theme in Afghanistan's history, a legacy that has inhibited the political, social and economic development of the country.

**The Post-Bonn Aspirations of Afghans:** The ouster of the Taliban regime and renewed interest in the region, unclouded by Cold War *realpolitik*, made many believe that Afghanistan was embarking on a new beginning.

Afghans and others describe the atmosphere in 2002 as euphoric, full of hope and possibility. Human rights, at least in terms of rhetoric, were central to the discussions on Afghanistan's future. Afghans called for an accountability process for violations, both past and present, and stressed that human rights be prioritized in development programming. The

*"Inside Afghanistan, there is guarded optimism about the future, with hopes for international action to break the power of warlords to ensure that the benefits of development reach those in greatest need of it."* Centre for Economic and Social Rights, *Human Rights and Reconstruction in Afghanistan*, May 2002.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission's 2004 nation-wide consultation, to determine how Afghans wanted to address a long history of human rights violations, found that 69 per cent viewed themselves as victims of crimes against humanity and war crimes, 40 per cent demanded the prosecution of notorious perpetrators, and 90 per cent requested the removal of human rights violators from public office.<sup>6</sup> On the development side, the 2006 Afghanistan Compact, and subsequent 2008 ANDS grouped human rights with governance and rule of law, denoting a narrow understanding of human rights' cross-cutting nature, which includes equitable economic and social development.<sup>7</sup>

With Afghanistan at the centre of the world's attention, there was an opportunity to ensure that words would be translated into concrete and well-resourced plans to improve the life of Afghans. However, it very quickly became clear that this rhetorical engagement was not going to be reflected in the financial investment in Afghanistan's future. The 2002 Tokyo Conference participants pledged USD 5.1 billion of non-military aid over five years.<sup>8</sup> Of this amount, one quarter was in fact re-pledged, reducing the total commitment. While precise and definitive figures are difficult to obtain, according to the Government the sum of USD 46 billion has been committed since 2002, with over USD 35 billion being delivered by mid 2009.<sup>9</sup> Using a different time period, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief's (ACBAR) 2008 study found that since 2001, donors have agreed to provide USD 25 billion in aid for civil reconstruction and development, but only delivered USD 15 billion, with approximately six billion going back to donor countries through consultants' fees and profit.<sup>10</sup>

The direction of aid has also been supply-driven. With international actors driving the planning of the reconstruction and stabilization efforts, the Interim Administration was only able to play a limited role in the substantive planning processes, and the participation of Afghans, outside official circles, was simply neglected.<sup>11</sup> Seven years after Tokyo, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, with worse development indicators than in 2007.<sup>12</sup> One in three Afghans lives in absolute poverty (approximately nine million people, 36 per cent of the population) and cannot meet his or her basic needs.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, 37 per cent were situated slightly above the poverty line.<sup>14</sup> Thus, two out of three Afghans live an impoverished and undignified life, struggling daily to provide *naan-o-chai* (bread and tea) for their families.

All development indicators show that poverty reduction efforts have had little impact on the daily life of most Afghans: Afghanistan has the second highest maternal mortality rate, making it the single highest cause of death in the country,<sup>15</sup> and the third worst



global ranking for child mortality; drinking water supplies reach only 23 per cent of Afghans; only 24 per cent of the population who are 15 years and older can read and write; an estimated 12.6 per cent of women are literate and there is only 20 per cent literacy in rural areas; this number drops to six per cent for nomadic people.<sup>16</sup>

Afghanistan's development indicators compare poorly with neighboring countries. In 2009, maternal mortality in Afghanistan was 1,600 per 100,000 live births, which is five (Pakistan) to fifty times (Uzbekistan) higher than the situation in neighboring countries.

The precarious position of Afghans living in poverty means that they have a limited ability to absorb the impact of adverse events. Anything ranging from drought,<sup>17</sup> floods, or a health facility with no medication, can have a debilitating impact on their lives. This is compounded by the absence of social security and the Government's inability to respond to the population's needs, especially in times of crisis.<sup>18</sup>

*After the 2009 floods, a doctor from Dehdadi district of Balkh province told human rights monitors that "[t]hese people have lost their entire assets, their homes, land, crops and all household stuff while the aid agencies give them a bag of wheat and a blanket per family. How would this address the problem? These people are in need of continuous support and protection."*

Traditional coping mechanisms are stretched and often result in a number of negative consequences, such as deeper levels of poverty and loss of social and cultural networks.

The poor in Afghanistan are amongst the most impoverished in the world and statistical averages hide differences, for example, between men and women, or between nomads and those who are settled. Such differences are critical to understanding "who is poor and why?" in order to identify the human rights factors which come into play in creating and sustaining poverty. Notwithstanding the many constraints inherent in an insecure environment, greater efforts are needed to secure disaggregated data by ethnic or tribal group, age, urban, rural, informal and formal settlements, disability, sex, nomadic and settled. Similarly, indicators to measure the impact of poverty reduction interventions must show who is being empowered to enjoy the benefits of development, who is left behind, and the reasons for this.

## II. The Abuse of Power

*Political patrons, corrupt officials and non-democratically elected power-holders are not known to work in the interests of the public good; their personal gain takes priority over the interests and needs of the population.*

*Local governance that provided a degree of accountability between leaders and communities has been undermined. Kabul-based decision-makers are disconnected from rural realities.*

*Afghans have limited means to have their needs and aspirations fully considered and respected by decision-makers in the Government and the international community.*

*Support by the international community to mistrusted Afghan power-holders further entrenches abusive, dysfunctional, and corrupt political structures.*

A key driver of poverty in Afghanistan is the abuse of power. Many Afghan power-holders use their influence to drive the public agenda for their own personal or vested interests. “Personal or vested interest” goes beyond the individual to the (extended) family, tribe, political and other affiliations. Influence is used in relation to the law, policy, practice of public officials, or resource allocation. Power-holders routinely look for opportunities to increase their personal gain or wealth; this often occurs at the expense of the poor who are rarely prioritized. The way power-holders emerge and how they use their power, in particular with respect to the use of resources, entrenches social exclusion, perpetuates unequal access to social justice, and undermines efforts geared to the enjoyment of human rights

*“The post-Taliban government under President Karzai surprised many Afghans in that it largely reinstated the commander networks that held power before the Taliban, instead of seeking the support of the older networks of landowners, tribal elders and urban elites.”* Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2009

“Again and again, powerlessness seems to be at the core of a bad life”.<sup>19</sup> While applicable throughout the world, this World Bank statement accurately describes the situation of the Afghan poor. They are not part of the power structures that decide who receives basic services, who benefits from development programmes, or who is part of decision-making processes that are mostly not transparent. Even the “official” representatives of the people, whether in Parliament or other elected body, rarely genuinely represent their constituents' opinion and decisions. Non-participation in, and exclusion from, decision-making that affects the lives of Afghans greatly inhibit the ability of the poor to make informed decisions and to expand their choices; this, in turn, negates or curtails opportunities to overcome poverty.

Afghanistan's governance structure is Kabul-centric and significantly disconnected from the rural poor. In the past, strong independent local leadership filled the distance between the central Government and the vast majority of the population. Traditionally, local leadership was, to a certain extent, accountable to the community, as the latter had some influence on who wielded power. Local leaders emerged based on their knowledge, leadership skills, capabilities and relationship with concerned communities.

Central Government attitude to local leaders was linked to the support such leaders received from concerned communities. The prospect of losing local support served as a strong incentive to take into consideration the views of the community. While such leadership was not perfect, particularly in terms of marginalized groups' and individuals' needs, it was more accountable than national or Kabul-centric processes. Accordingly, community members had greater influence on local level decision-making processes than is the current situation.

Over the past 30 years, local governance structures have been undermined, manipulated, politicized, or underutilized. Many local leaders have been killed, removed, or have stepped aside from their former roles. They were progressively replaced by a new set of actors usually supported by those in positions of power, whether within the Government, or linked to warlordism, insurgency or the criminal apparatus. For instance, Provincial Governors are appointed by the President, without the communities' involvement. As a result, they rarely enjoy the support of their constituents; this further deepens the gap between decision-makers and the population. Nowadays, the power and authority of local leaders is very much at the discretion of un-elected Governors.

Governance at the local level has shifted from leadership that is accountable to concerned communities to individuals who control military or financial resources. Field

research shows that access to food aid is often dependent on the relationship between those distributing the food and those in need so that the most food insecure are not prioritized. In Afghanistan, food distribution is mostly

*“Here in Ghor, if you are linked to a local commander or a governmental official, you can enjoy any kind of humanitarian aid regardless of your economic status.”*  
Provincial Official, Ghor Province, 2009

in the hands of those who are in a position of power.<sup>20</sup> Many of the respondents interviewed during the field research believed that only 15–20 per cent of the food aid reached the poorest people. For example, only 40 sacks of wheat were distributed to some 600 families through food aid programme in Badgah village in the Western Ghor Province, while in Kasi village in the same province, only 10 sacks were provided to some 300 families. These communities felt that this amount was woefully insufficient given their level of poverty. Apart from the general disillusionment, the communities believed, rightly or wrongly, that the food aid had been either embezzled or diverted elsewhere. Such beliefs were heard again and again throughout the field survey. In Tirinkot, Uruzgan Province, some policemen took a large share of the food aid by force: “when the authorities distributing the aid refused to give a share to policemen, the police fired in the air to hold control of the situation”, said a local interviewed by field researchers.<sup>21</sup> In Charsada district of Ghor Province, many Government officials were found to be involved in stealing food aid in 2009; despite repeated complaints from the population, no action was ever taken.<sup>22</sup>

The lack of accountability is equally problematic at the national level. Political power is exercised on the basis of personal relationships through a patronage system. Different factions constantly realign for the purposes of political and economic gain. “Senior posts are generally used as political capital in negotiations and patronage relations, appointees are not necessarily selected for their eligibility, but are often awarded certain

*“In the past five years, there has been no accountability for what has or has not been done. So what kind of guarantee is there for the future?”* Head, Provincial Education Department, 2009

positions as part of a broader political and economic bargaining process, in which competence and future performance in the field of governance does not necessarily feature.”<sup>23</sup> This also affects the quality and relevance of decisions made because the decision-making process does not benefit from skilled expertise. The patronage system goes down to district administrator or even lower level appointments in certain districts. When decision-makers face resistance or opposition, including from the constituencies they are supposed to serve, the patronage system ensures that favoured power-holders are simply re-shuffled to another location or official position. The current political system removes, or at best obscures, the few currently existing accountability mechanisms.<sup>24</sup> This leaves Afghans subject to the fickle and shifting allegiances of patronage politics.

Failure to address human rights violations perpetuates the continued abuse of power. The lack of political will on the part of Afghan leaders and the country’s international partners to address a long history of abuse nurtures the prevailing culture of impunity. As long as egregious violations are ignored, implicit permission is given to those who wield and abuse power. Reports of abuses committed by public officials rarely result in any investigation or prosecution so that no effective remedy is available. Fear of reprisals and intimidation by power-brokers similarly impedes opportunities for accountability. This, coupled with the absence of positive outcomes when complaints are made, explains why Afghans are often reluctant to file complaints or to raise problems publicly. As noted by a respondent in Ghor: “[o]ur people do not complain because they strongly believe their claims will have no result.”<sup>25</sup> The absence of law enforcement officials, with very few exceptions, at the district level means that law and order is not systematically enforced in large parts of Afghanistan. Thus, those who want to change the *status quo* must do so without the support or protection of public institutions.

Civil society<sup>26</sup> and the role of the media<sup>27</sup> as watchdogs have limited opportunity to question the *status quo* in Afghanistan. While there is occasional public debate, as was the case during the 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council elections campaign, it is mostly in urban areas. Civil society is not generally seen as a force that can have an impact on the way Government and donors’ policies are devised and implemented. The suppression of freedom of expression, by both the Government and the insurgents, is, in particular, manifested in harassment and intimidation, the arbitrary arrest of journalists and in heavy judicial sentences.<sup>28</sup>

There is a growing sense of disillusionment among Afghans who expect the State to perform certain functions.<sup>29</sup> A community leader from Kharwar district in Logar province, which is now heavily impacted by the presence of insurgents, indicated “that over 90 per cent of the people in the district, including women, cast their votes in the 2004 Presidential elections mostly in support of Karzai. But now, the people are disappointed in the Government’s performance and feel they are completely ignored.”<sup>30</sup>

The governance model currently in place in Afghanistan means that decisions are controlled by a limited number of people, and taken through opaque and unaccountable processes. Power-holders have little incentive to share power, to be guided by the public interest, or to deliver on their promises. As a small-landholder explained to field researchers concerning an agreement to eradicate poppies in Nangahar “the agreement made by local elders to ban poppy cultivation was not in favor of the poor; the latter had their fields destroyed but the poppy fields belonging to powerful individuals were not destroyed.”<sup>31</sup>

## Corruption

The most discussed aspect of the abuse of power in Afghanistan is corruption and the diversion of resources, including those allocated by the international community. In 2005 Afghanistan ranked 117 out of 159 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Index. Four years later, Afghanistan was assessed as the second most corrupt country in the world, just ahead of strife-torn Somalia.\* In 2010, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that Afghans paid USD 2.5 billion in bribes over the past year.\*\* One Afghan out of two had to pay at least one bribe to a public official. This amounted to an average of USD 158 paid per capita, in a country that has an annual GDP per capita of USD 425, thus "a crippling tax on people who are already among the world's poorest."

Corrupt practices are entrenched given a weak judiciary and few effective oversight mechanisms. Although they are resented, even the poor, if they can, will provide bribes to get a service.

Different examples of corruption in Afghanistan have been identified, ranging from payment for Government positions to bribes for basic services. These forms of corruption distort whatever criteria may exist for public resource allocation. When a person cannot access public services because s/he cannot or refuses to pay a bribe, or buy a public post, the principle of non-discrimination is void of meaning. Corruption's damaging effects are numerous: weak public institutions, inequitable social services, lack of justice delivered by the justice institutions, no confidence in the State and widespread inefficiency. Poor Afghans tend to bear the greatest burden. They are thus further marginalized as they, who usually depend more on public services, are least able to pay bribes for those services. When resources that should have been used for the provision of justice, health, education and other public services are diverted from their original objectives, crucial efforts to move Afghans out of poverty, and to improve the life of the overall population, are squandered.

In the Afghan context where unequal relations of power are a key feature of the decision-making process and the State is, mostly, not beholden to Afghan citizens, the environment is ripe for those in power to advance their own desires. Corruption influences the way decisions are made and defines public institutions' priorities. As a consequence, social exclusion is sustained because priorities are determined by those with power and not by the marginalized. As the Afghan context shows, corruption is also implicitly encouraged when there is no genuine means for affected individuals to call the Government to account or to demand transparency.

\* [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2009/cpi\\_2009\\_table](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009/cpi_2009_table).

\*\*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as reported by the victims, January 2010.

### III. The Absence of Security

*Insecurity is a constant in the lives of Afghans; armed conflict compounds and exacerbates poverty and inhibits or halts development programmes.*

*Conflict breeds the conditions for local disputes to be “resolved” through violent means.*

*Notwithstanding widespread acknowledgement that a militarized approach is not a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan, investment in issues such as poverty alleviation or justice, that are of priority concern to Afghans, is extremely limited.*

Armed conflict has impacted the lives of almost all Afghans, namely 96 per cent of the population.<sup>32</sup> This is a staggering statistic that includes deaths, injuries, disability, and destruction of homes, assets, and livelihoods that are essential for survival. The ICRC study also shows that 76 per cent of Afghans were driven from their homes and 6 per cent became separated from their own families during the long years of war.

The immediate and direct impact of the armed conflict in terms of civilian casualties has received a growing amount of attention in different policy circles as the death toll has continued to rise in recent years.<sup>33</sup> Almost half of the Afghan population has reported loss of family members as a result of the many years of fighting. Some of the most deadly tactics used in the current phase of the conflict include the use of improvised explosive devices, air strikes, suicide attacks, and night raids.<sup>34</sup>

*“Many health facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and access to medical care is severely limited. Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar is the sole referral hospital for the 3.7 million people who live in southern Afghanistan. Every month, it treats around 5,000 outpatients and 2,000 inpatients.”*  
ICRC Afghanistan Opinion Survey, 2009.

In addition to the cost in lives, Afghans have suffered from loss of livelihood and disruption of access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. In some locations, schools have been closed, clinics are inaccessible, and roads can only be used with caution. The conflict also impacts on the capacity of Afghans’ partners to address humanitarian and development needs: the number of local NGO staff killed in violent incidents fell in 2009 but, nonetheless, 19 NGO staff - all Afghans - were killed and 172 incidents were recorded. In 2008, 38 aid workers died in violent circumstance. Reduced fatalities largely reflect tighter security measures, including self-imposed restrictions of movement and changes in security policies by most of the NGOs working in Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> As a result, in some areas, development programmes have come to a halt and humanitarian action has been severely reduced as insecurity limits access and humanitarian space has diminished. Thus, vulnerability is on the rise and traditional coping mechanisms are often inadequate.

Women and children – the “unseen victims” of the Afghan conflict – bear a huge burden when a family loses its chief breadwinner: “[m]any families have lost a male member of their family leaving orphans, widows and families without support. In many cases, these families have lost their breadwinners and now, their women and children are begging on the streets”.<sup>36</sup> Given the social and cultural norms that obtain in Afghanistan, when insecurity restricts access to local services such as education or health care, women and children face additional threats to their well-being as alternatives are not, in general, available to them.

The armed conflict has other effects that add to the misery and further impoverishment of the poor. The nature of the war that includes the use of asymmetrical tactics, including in particular the use of IEDs (improved explosive device) and suicide attacks, as well as air strikes and night-time raids, results in a high level of fear and intimidation that impacts on livelihood and income-generation opportunities as well as access to essential services. The combined and accumulated effect of protracted conflict, including local-level disputes, poses huge challenges to social and economic development initiatives.

Decades of warfare have also had repercussions on traditional, community-level, dispute resolution mechanisms that have significant financial and other implications for the rural poor. Frequently, personal enmities and local disputes, particularly in the context of access to, or use of, natural resources such as land, water, forests or pastures, lead to outcomes that are disadvantageous to the least powerful. A recent example from Khost Province, that is not unusual elsewhere in the country, resulted in dozens of deaths.<sup>37</sup> In this instance, the *Jirga* decided to ban the rival parties altogether from accessing the contested resources. To maintain a ceasefire, the *Jirga* also closed schools, clinics and certain transportation routes, thus not only denying the local population's access to services, but also adding an additional economic burden as trade was impeded.

Afghans have repeatedly, identified "poverty and unemployment as the driving forces behind insecurity", and called for these issues to be addressed as a priority:<sup>38</sup> According to a recent Oxfam study, "seventy per cent of Afghans surveyed see poverty and unemployment as the major cause of the conflict in their country."<sup>39</sup> Some people participate in insurgent activities to acquire an income. Joining anti-government elements or undertaking other illegal activities, such as drug production and trafficking, is often more lucrative, and with immediate returns, than struggling with farming or working in the informal sector for low wages. For example, some Kuchi youth in the south-eastern province of Khost, reported to field researchers that planting road mines or IEDs, brings in between Pak Rs.1000 and 5000 (about USD16 to 80)<sup>40</sup> while a fortunate daily labourer earns a maximum of USD4 a day. Revenge and rivalry are amongst other factors explaining the interest of some who participate directly in the armed conflict.

Insecurity breeds its own dynamic and compounds the inability of public institutions, including in the justice and security sectors, to protect the interests of the poor. The Government's inability to protect communities from lawlessness puts Afghans at the mercy of power-holders. A pertinent example includes a commander in Faryab Province who forced economic migrants working in Iran to pay a share of their earnings as a tax for his own benefit —called *Iranpoli* literally translated as "Iran money." His control would even reach personal matters: no wedding ceremony could take place unless each party paid him around USD100 and he would even have a say in the choice of the spouses. The Government was unable to intervene as the area was insecure and under the control of the local commander's armed men.<sup>41</sup> Only a joint commission composed of local influential leaders (comprising former commanders, religious and other community leaders), that supported provincial authorities, was eventually able to disarm his group. Similar examples can be found throughout Afghanistan and highlight the numerous difficulties faced by the poor.

The conflict has shaped the priorities of the Afghan Government and its international partners as a large proportion of aid funds go to the insecure provinces. For example, if Helmand was a country it would be the world's fifth largest recipient of funds from USAID.<sup>42</sup> This necessarily influences decisions on the provision of funding for

development and poverty reduction efforts. Since 2001, approximately USD 25 billion has been spent to build Afghan security forces; in addition, the US has allocated USD127 billion for the war in Afghanistan, with current figures estimated at USD100 million a day. In contrast, development funds amount to USD15 billion in total.<sup>43</sup>

Many donors have pledged specific amounts to assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. But many promises have yet to be fulfilled: from the overall USD46 billion pledged from 2002 to the present, only about three-quarters has been provided so far.<sup>44</sup> It is estimated that 15-30 per cent of aid provided by donors is spent on their own security in Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> Insecurity is one of the reasons given by donors to explain their failure to provide the full amount of pledged funds. When such funding decisions are coupled with widespread corruption and incompetent and unaccountable public institutions, that are routinely unable to deliver services, insecure regions of Afghanistan face significant hurdles in combating poverty and abysmal levels of destitution.

Nonetheless, and notwithstanding multiple constraints, donor funding has been instrumental in the expansion of health care and education as well as communication and transport infrastructure. Humanitarian aid, including food aid, is vital for those who are most vulnerable. For example, food-for-work provides both a source of income and food in many parts of the country.<sup>46</sup> However, increasing insecurity has halted and undermined many development initiatives. For instance, the trade route of the Kabul-Kandahar highway, reconstructed with USAID funding in December 2003, can only be used at high risk because of criminal and insurgency activities.

Of course, the impact of the conflict goes way beyond the well-documented problem of civilian casualties and the denial of humanitarian assistance. It also impacts on the psyche as well as the purses of Afghans. Coupled with destruction of infrastructure and limitations in the delivery of services, insecurity in all its forms stifles development including incentives to invest in the future.



#### IV. The Inequitable Allocation of Resources

*The vast amount of resources coming into Afghanistan is defined by military objectives, rather than the reconstruction and development priorities of Afghans.*

*The majority of decisions on allocation of resources are not in the hands of the Government of Afghanistan.*

With three-quarters of aid by-passing the Afghan Government, the latter's ability to influence decisions as to how resources are prioritized and used is severely constrained.<sup>47</sup> While corruption and weak capacity has long been referred to by donors, often legitimately, to explain their vertical interventions, it is only in recent months that discussions have taken place regarding both the Government's and international community's commitments to combating corruption. One respondent interviewed by field researchers, noted that donor countries are spending funds in accordance with their own political and military agendas rather than responding to on-the-ground realities or an objective and impartial needs assessment: "[w]e have not understood aid politics. If the international community provides aid for their own purposes, priorities, and choices, it is simply not productive."<sup>48</sup> Aid agencies are making similar complaints,<sup>49</sup> according to one aid agency, the trend is to fund high value projects that are often "implemented through large for-profit private companies, linked to military and political priorities, and targeting geographical areas where the donors have a military presence or political interest. The development and humanitarian needs of the Afghan people are not being met, despite significant donor funding to Afghanistan."<sup>50</sup> Overall, such *modus operandi* makes it difficult to meet the population's actual needs.

Aid is delivered through a range of mechanisms that serve different strategies, some of which are not necessarily consistent with the Afghan Government's priorities. One such

example is the controversial "Hearts and Minds" strategy, which forms part of the operational guidance to the US military and does not appear in any of the Government's strategic planning documents.<sup>51</sup> Significant spending is channeled through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), a key "Hearts and Minds" actor. While it is conceded by some that this might be necessary in certain highly insecure areas, under this scheme assistance is driven by military priorities.<sup>52</sup> This challenges the notion of sustainable and equitable development which requires assistance to target the most poor and vulnerable, and not "capitalize upon battlefield gains".<sup>53</sup> PRTs have significant funding and technical capacity, which has resulted in PRTs in some cases not only assuming, but sometimes eclipsing, local government responsibilities. This has stunted the growth of local public institutions, thus impairing medium- to long-term sustainable development and "hinders efforts to increase Afghan ownership of the development process."<sup>54</sup> Despite recently

*The mandate of the PRTs is "to assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform and reconstruction efforts." PRT Executive Steering Committee, 27 January 2005. Congress describes the US PRTs' objective "to capitalize upon battlefield gains and undermine insurgent recruitment by strengthening ties between citizen and state." Congressional Budget Justification, Fiscal Year 2009, South and Central Asia Overview, 556.*

renewed donors' public commitment to "Afghanize" reconstruction efforts, decision-making about Afghanistan's security and development continue to remain largely in international hands. In addition, the issue of where aid money eventually ends up remains of concern: an estimated 40 per cent is reported to be channeled back to donor countries through consultant fees, overhead, and corporate profit.<sup>55</sup> In 2008, 81 per cent of the Afghan population believed that less than 40 per cent of aid reaches the Afghan population.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, even where donors have had significant influence, for example in the development of the ANDS, it is not necessarily a guarantee of financial support. The January 2009 Donors Financial Review reported that almost half of the money committed – 4.8 billion out of 10.4 billion – remains out of line with ANDS sector priorities; when funds directly spent by donors are taken into account. Despite strong donor endorsement to the ANDS, and agreement at the 2006 London Conference that the 10.4 billion pledged would be tied to the implementation of the ANDS.<sup>57</sup>

A case in point is that of agriculture. In the ANDS, as well as the Paris (2008) and the Hague Conferences (2009), the Afghan Government identified the agricultural sector as a key priority. It is argued that "the development of agriculture will decide if the country fails or succeeds in light of its impact on poverty reduction, job creation and revenue collection."<sup>58</sup> However, this sector continues to be seriously underfunded, inhibiting the implementation of programmes key to Afghanistan's development. An additional issue that this example demonstrates is how the agricultural sector will be funded. The Government has put forward a comprehensive programme, but if donors pick and choose what parts they are willing to fund, or continue to fund their agriculture priorities, not the Government's, the programme will not achieve its objectives. As agricultural experts note, the challenge in responding to poverty is not only the quantity of agricultural production but, more importantly, the distribution and a household's access to the fruits of such agricultural production.<sup>59</sup> During a series of OHCHR workshops (Dai Kundi, 2009), one respondent summarized the views of many "[i]t is the international donors that decide our development projects. I have been in provincial government administration for six years and they still have not listened to what our needs really are."<sup>60</sup>

Different initiatives have been launched to address challenges of aid flows. One of these is the 2006 Afghanistan Compact's Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) which was established in part to coordinate the efforts of Afghanistan's international partners and the Government.<sup>61</sup> Rather than being a forum in which donors pursue their own priorities, the JCMB was supposed to help ensure that funds were spent in a sound manner consistent with development priorities set by the Government. Despite calls for it to be supported as the sole coordination body,<sup>62</sup> the JCMB has certainly in the past struggled to achieve "greater coherence of efforts by the Afghan Government and international community to implement the Compact" as per its mandate.<sup>63</sup> A positive development was reported in early 2010, when Kai Eide, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Afghanistan, indicated that UN-initiated JCMB reforms have yielded a more effective coordination mechanism and has allowed for better identification of priorities. Nevertheless, he also emphasized that progress remains to be made in aligning donor funds with these priorities.<sup>64</sup>

The inequitable allocation of development funding to the various provinces in Afghanistan has been a long-standing concern. At the 2008 Paris Conference on aid

effectiveness, it was urged that “the benefits of development must reach all provinces equitably.” However, a significant proportion of Government and donor funds and resources continue to be channeled to conflict areas, in particular through the PRTs, resulting in stable areas receiving much less.<sup>65</sup> Development funding is also ignoring parts of the country with true economic potential, where relatively stable conditions would allow donor agencies to develop critically needed services and infrastructure. As stated by a leader from Ab-e-Kamari district of Badghis province in Western Afghanistan, referring to the delivery of significant amounts of aid to the insecure districts of the Province solely: “Despite being very poor, the people of my district cooperated with the Government and established security across the district, and the district was given the title of “district of peace” by the Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups programme. We are also poor and need help, but, we see now that all assistance goes to Bala Morghab district. It poses the question of whether we too should consider allowing some insurgents’ activities to make the Government pay attention to us.”<sup>66</sup> The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission found that “[t]hrough resources allocated to insecure areas are more than those allocated to secure ones, people’s participation in employing such resources is at a low level. If development programmes do not consider the systematic participation of the vulnerable and poor, the rich will become richer, the influential will become more influential, and the poor will become poorer day by day.”<sup>67</sup>

## V. Lack of Choice

*Opportunities for a majority of Afghans to overcome poverty and live a dignified life are extremely limited; in addition, cultural norms inhibit women from participating in the work force, making them and their households more vulnerable to poverty.*

*The international community pursues military and political strategies; Afghan power-holders act largely in their personal interests.*

*Initiatives that do not value the priorities of the poor prove ineffective and unsustainable.*

“The defining feature of a poor person is that they have very restricted opportunities to pursue their well-being.”<sup>68</sup> Poor Afghans have very few choices or options in life, in particular when it comes to finding ways to overcome poverty.

At the individual or household level, poverty seriously limits the ability of a vast majority of Afghans to live a dignified life including the ability to make choices that match their aspirations. A striking example relates to education as it often depends on the economic status of a family, even in areas where schools are available and accessible. Poverty is one of the principal reasons why parents send their children to work rather than to school or why children are married at an early age.<sup>69</sup> UNICEF

*“She was offered to her cousin in exchange for the price of foodstuffs and life expenditure that he provided the girl’s family since her father was imprisoned in 2004.”*  
Human Rights monitor, Dai Kundi, 2008

estimates that up to 30 per cent of primary school children are working and are often the sole source of income for their families.<sup>70</sup> In turn, the lack of (higher or vocational) education acutely hampers the type of professional opportunities that an Afghan can enjoy and thus, the level of potential income. The majority of Afghans are employed in the informal sector and perform unskilled labour that yields little revenue: “Afghanistan’s labour market has the typical characteristics of a less developed economy, it is dominated by the agricultural sector and performs poorly in providing productive employment and decent work. More than 90 per cent of jobs can be classified as vulnerable employment that does not secure stable and sufficient income.”<sup>71</sup> This is due, in part, to the absence of Government policies to diversify economic opportunities that would broaden the choice available to Afghans, in terms of income-generating activities.

Powerful social norms restrict Afghans’ choices. This is particularly true with respect to women’s ability to operate in the public sphere.<sup>72</sup> For a large majority of women, whose life is confined to the home compound, there are few opportunities contribute meaningfully to society beyond raising children and carrying out domestic chores. Half of the Afghan population is, from its very birth, inhibited from contributing to, and participating in, society, further impacting poverty levels.

While women are usually responsible for running the household, they are generally excluded from the family’s economic affairs. In rural communities, women do not have knowledge of what the household income and expenditure is, including with respect to choosing how the family’s revenues are spent.<sup>73</sup> As stated by one respondent: “if a man’s wife is given the opportunity to interfere in the household’s economic issues or she has control over it, and this issue is learnt by that man’s friends, they will make fun of him and he will be stigmatized.”

Within this cultural context, it is not surprising that poverty is most pronounced in female-headed households.<sup>74</sup> Female heads of households' ability to raise income is limited, impacting on how their families can be fed, educated and otherwise cared for. Social and cultural limitations generally do not allow Afghan women to play the role of bread-winner. In particular, the Afghan interpretation of *Shari'a* requires women to be accompanied by a *mahram* (male chaperone) to go out of the house; this restricts access to a wide range of occupational activities.

At the macro level, decisions are frequently made on the basis of a poor understanding of the population's needs or of specific projects' potential impact. According to the ANDS, participation is "the process by which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocations, and/or program implementation."<sup>75</sup> However, as noted by Integrity Watch "[s]uch influence and control over decision-making in practice is proportionate to the roles, responsibilities and powers of the stakeholders even though ideally they should be proportionate to the extent each stakeholder is affected by them. Such participation is therefore non-existent in parts of the ANDS."<sup>76</sup>

Development projects are often implemented to serve political and military agendas; they rarely take into consideration or respect choices made by Afghans, even when they have been consulted.<sup>77</sup> Recently, a report on USAID funding concluded "[t]he vast majority of USAID funds are invested in programs that are designed from cubicles in Kabul by officers who are rarely able to get out from behind the USAID and Embassy compound walls due to security concerns."<sup>78</sup> A commonly cited example is that of PRT-built schools; too often neither teachers nor teaching materials are available, nor is the Ministry of Education capable of managing the school which has been built in an area chosen to win the "hearts and minds" of local population.<sup>79</sup> In some locations, due to the prevailing insecurity, locals are hesitant to send their children to such schools. Accordingly, various actors have called upon the PRTs, and the military in general, to restrict their involvement in schools.

The controversial PRT model is considered to have frequently undermined the creation of effective local and national government institutions, and to have ignored the choices that would have been made by the beneficiaries: "[d]ifficulties in achieving community participation has adversely affected the use and suitability of the projects (...)"<sup>80</sup> as well in certain cases attracting anti-government attacks.<sup>81</sup> In contrast, a survey of school burnings by the Taliban found that schools built by the Government-run National Solidarity Programme, that pursues a bottom-up approach and engages communities, have less chance of being destroyed by insurgents than schools built without community support. Examples abound of failed development initiatives because intended beneficiaries were not consulted or their ideas were simply ignored. A farmer in Balkh, commenting on a poppy elimination scheme noted: "Our farmers got ploughs in return for giving up poppies. But what use are ploughs if we don't know how to use them as no formal mechanism is in place, and even if we can, we can't afford to use them."<sup>82</sup> Expanding the choices available to poor people necessitates their genuine participation in initiatives geared to alleviating their poverty.

## VI. Discrimination and Exclusion

*Social and cultural, as well as some legal, norms perpetuate and are seen to justify continued discriminatory practices that disenfranchise large segments of the population.*

*Effective poverty reduction requires addressing the various factors that make Afghans poor or vulnerable to poverty and should not be limited to addressing levels of income.*

Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of the exclusion faced by a high proportion of Afghans. The everyday reality for the individuals obscured by poverty statistics is that the people are often hungry; they have limited access to health care; many cannot read or write; some may even sell a child, probably a girl,<sup>83</sup> to feed the family; their children work instead of going to school; and, they are more vulnerable to violence as they lack the protection that patronage, corruption and alternative security arrangements (such as the hiring of private security or migration) may offer. The limited options available to the poor include internal displacement and borrowing money. For those living in absolute poverty, there is no official safety net system, except for limited pensions for people with disabilities, and families of martyrs. While the extended family structure serves as an informal social safety net, community-based assistance tends to occur on a case-by-case basis through voluntary contribution or, on occasion, a *shura* initiative. In sum, help in times of distress can be hard to come by; for the very poor, adverse events, including sickness or a death in the family, can be calamitous.

While up to two-thirds of the Afghan population is deprived of its entitlement to enjoy a secure and dignified life, certain groups and individuals, by virtue of their status, suffer disproportionately. Exclusion and discrimination play a significant role in maintaining poverty in Afghanistan. Such deliberate and systemic marginalization is particularly significant and harmful for certain groups of Afghans including the following:

Landlessness: the rural population, which accounts for 74 per cent of Afghans, face particular challenges. It is estimated that the proportion of poor households among those that own land is 26 per cent, while amongst those that rent, sharecrop or have a mortgage on their land, the proportion is 42 per cent.<sup>84</sup> While it is evident that land is a direct source for the provision of food, it also provides one of the few safety nets available to Afghans. Those who own land have the confidence to borrow from shopkeepers or relatives. Accordingly, landless Afghans have more difficulties getting credit, be it money or material goods.

*The Kuchi rarely have access to health services. A suggested strategy to address the problem was to establish mobile health clinics for Kuchi. However, because Kuchi communities are vulnerable to threats from the insurgents, the limited number of mobile health clinics are unable to operate in any of the insecure areas. In addition, the mobile schools are seriously affected by insecurity: teachers receive threats; schools are targeted and materials are burned. Head of Kuchi Affairs, Gardez, 2009.*

Kuchi: 54 per cent of the Kuchi are deemed to be extremely poor, making them the poorest group in Afghanistan.<sup>85</sup> Their nomadic lifestyle makes them particularly vulnerable to poverty and a host of risk factors. As described by a Provincial official, “the Kuchi are at risk of harm from scorpion, snake, and wild animals as well as rain, flood, cold, heat and other weather changes because of their lifestyle.”<sup>86</sup> A combination of factors, including their cultural identity, and their

dependence on livestock and migration, sets them apart from sedentary communities who constitute the majority of the Afghan population, this contributes to a high and systematic level of discrimination that is a factor in the widespread poverty that characterize the Kuchi.

During the years of the *Jihad*, many Kuchi migrated to Pakistan where they had to adopt a semi-urban lifestyle, leading to the abandonment of their livestock, their main means of livelihood. Upon their return to Afghanistan, Kuchi communities failed to secure their previous means of livelihood, or viable alternatives; instead, they temporarily set up their tents where sedentary communities allowed them to do so. In most cases, this meant in deserts or at the base of mountains, where arable and pastoral land was scarce. Few Kuchi succeed in finding work as daily labourers. Pasturelands used by Kuchi as their temporary residence before the war has become progressively more difficult to find as sedentary communities expand their farming activities. As a result, local disputes have arisen over the use of land leading at times to violence. The absence of proper acknowledgement by the modern Afghan State, including by not providing equitable allocation of land, has resulted in the Kuchi being deprived from their traditional livelihood opportunities, thus throwing them further into poverty. Recently, Kuchis have increasingly become more open restricting their migratory movements so as to benefit from public services, such as health and education. However, they have little access to decision-making processes and rarely benefit from an equitable share of Government resources or aid.

Persons with disabilities: the 2007-08 NRVA indicates that 1.6 per cent of the Afghan population has a disability, which is significantly lower than the estimated average of 10 per cent per any given population.<sup>87</sup> However, this percentage only includes people with severe disabilities, and it is understood that about one in five households includes a person with a disability. In addition, the statistics do not provide information about the number of people with disabilities who do not survive due to lack of access to essential services. 13 per cent of disability is attributable to the armed conflict, including mines and remnants of war while another third is caused by illness and ageing. Being disabled in Afghanistan means stigmatization and social exclusion. For instance, the probability that a disabled child will attend primary school is half that of a non-disabled child; disabled men are 50 per cent less likely to work than their non-disabled counterpart, and for disabled women, one-third.<sup>88</sup> Field research found that two-thirds of disabled headed households had extremely poor access to adequate food and only one out of ten disabled-headed households was found to enjoy access to adequate food. The research showed that even for disabled people owning land, they depended on leasing or sharecropping for cultivation of their lands, and consequently do not have full control over their agricultural produce. In terms of informal social safety nets or coping mechanisms, communities voluntarily give alms and assistance to disabled people. However, the research showed that many people with disabilities did not benefit from food aid programmes because of bureaucratic reasons such as being unable to register with relevant authorities.

Women: Sex inequality is the most marked form of inequality in Afghan society and the most pervasive. Gender inequalities demonstrated by statistics pertaining to health, mortality rates, education and literacy reflect institutionalized and discriminatory norms and practices; Afghan women and girls have much less choices in life than men and boys. Maternal mortality in Afghanistan is the second highest in the world, with approximately 25,000 deaths annually. This is the highest single cause of death in

Afghanistan. Respondents stated that “men hesitate to bring their wives for medical care as the nature of delivery is connected with intimacy and personal privacy which is seen as shameful to bring this into the public sphere.”<sup>89</sup> Significantly more girl children do not complete school, undermining their chances of using education as a way out of poverty. Afghanistan’s 2005 Millennium Development Progress Report found that regional comparisons of primary school completion rates for girls and progress toward gender equality showed Afghanistan to be the only country out of 16 ranked as “seriously off track”.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, field research indicates that there is a significant difference between men and women’s access to food, mainly due to culturally accepted discrimination and exclusion. Generally, men are served their meal first and receive the higher quality of the food available in the household. As stated by a respondent from Ghazni Province: “if the woman drinks milk, what will be given to men, children and guests?”<sup>91</sup> Ostensibly, the limitations on women’s participation in the social life of the community is not only enforced by men, but also followed and supported by women who face social ostracism for non-compliance. Similarly, women rarely inherit land. Although *Shari’a* allows a share for women (half of the men’s share in the case of siblings or one eighth of her husband’s property), it is customarily considered in Afghanistan inappropriate to ask brothers for a share. In some communities, brothers will cut ties with their sister who demands her share of the family inheritance. Forced by culture to take care of children, this makes it more difficult for them to find the time to be part of the workforce. “Women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings (...) they are workers in both spheres (...) and suffer the most when the two spheres are at cross purposes.”<sup>92</sup>



## VII. CONCLUSION

Understanding the human rights dimension of poverty is critical to the identification of underlying structural problems and processes that, left unaddressed, run the risk of undermining poverty reduction initiatives. A human rights perspective and analysis helps ensure that causes, and not just consequences, inform the design and implementation of programmes geared to the alleviation or elimination of chronic poverty. A frank examination of issues concerned with the nature and use of power, resource allocation, insecurity, and decision-making that adversely affects the lives of the poor points to the necessity of addressing structural inequalities that perpetuate and exacerbate poverty in Afghanistan.

Many Afghan power-brokers rarely make decisions that are in the best interests of the wider population including the poor. Indeed, too often they use their position to advance their own individual interests to the detriment of the public good. Deeply entrenched impunity coupled with weak or dysfunctional democratic processes and cultural norms that keep women and others on the sidelines, at the local and national level, helps perpetuate abusive power structures.

The twin evils of impunity and injustice affect the lives of Afghans in ways that have a direct bearing on their ability to expand choices and access opportunities to reduce deprivation as well as their marginalized and impoverished status. Large segments of the Afghan population are effectively disenfranchised and marginalized; their voices are rarely heard. Women, the landless, Kuchi nomads, and people with disabilities are particularly discriminated against in today's Afghanistan.

Widespread insecurity, whether associated with local disputes that result in violence or military operations associated with the insurgency, has a profound and deleterious impact on the lives of Afghans as well as efforts to secure improved governance and equitable development. Insecurity creates a permissive environment for the abuse of power and greatly diminishes the ability of Afghans to access essential services. Growing preoccupation with, and investment in, the pursuit of military options has, almost invariably, diverted resources and attention away from development and poverty reduction efforts that are of critical importance to stability and the realization of a durable peace. The persistent focus, both in national and international policy and decision-making circles, with short-term objectives has long-term repercussions particularly in terms of combating impunity and, by extension, achieving a modicum of economic and social justice.

Poverty is neither accidental nor inevitable. As reviewed in this report, human rights are a critical factor that should be considered to help the poor benefit from socio-economic and other development initiatives. An important first question is "who are the poor?" In other words, who are the Afghans who are most poor and most at risk of further deprivation? Statistics only go so far in explaining hunger, maternal mortality, low levels of literacy, or the limited choices that hobble the lives of the poor. Other important questions include those that only the poor can answer namely their priorities, viewpoints, aspirations and level of commitment to participate in activities that are ostensibly designed for their benefit.

Experience in Afghanistan also points to the importance of concerned stakeholders, whether national or local-level decision-makers, as well as the poor themselves, being

capacitated to participate, meaningfully, in the design and implementation of poverty alleviation strategies. The use of a human rights framework facilitates those who wish to hear the voice of Afghans, including, in particular the poor, to enhance their poverty reduction programming. In sum, it is not realistic to anticipate that poverty reduction processes that do not address underlying structural problems, including the marginalization of particular segments of society, will succeed in the absence of a clear commitment and measures geared to transforming the lives of the poor and the circumstances and conditions that breed poverty. In this respect, the achievement of particular human rights objectives, including for example in relation to discrimination, can serve as a useful indicator to determine whether the overall impact proved positive for the most impoverished.

Poverty in Afghanistan does not occur in a vacuum. Ongoing policy discussions at the international level have significant implications for Afghans who struggle to survive below or just above the poverty line. The pursuit of military or other strategies that ignore or exacerbate the plight of the poor are questionable from any perspective. Such approaches, whatever their short-term outcomes, are also likely to undermine or thwart stabilization or peace consolidation efforts.

A growing number of Afghans are increasingly disillusioned and dispirited as the compact between the people, the Government, and its international partners is widely seen to have not delivered adequately on the most basic fundamentals including security, justice, food, shelter, health, jobs and the prospect of a better future. Almost nine years after the Bonn Agreement, and a series of international conferences on Afghanistan that, in principle, were designed to take stock of the reconstruction and development building project and devise corrective action, it is time to listen to the voices of the poor who constitute the bulk of the Afghan people. Whether a subsistence farmer in Dai Kundi, a young woman preparing to give birth in Badhakshan, a landless peasant in Ghor, a Kuchi nomad in Paktya, or a disabled youth in Kandahar, a common aspiration is that diverse stakeholders who claim concern about the status and well-being of the Afghan people take steps to ensure their investment, whatever its nature, does not compound the difficulties faced by the poor. A recycling or re-packaging of old policies that disregarded or compounded poverty is a recipe to further disenfranchise and erode the confidence of the poor in public institutions.

Research for this report, including insights from a wide cross-section of Afghan society, found that the poor desire a foothold to a future where their human rights are respected and they have a say in the events and circumstances that shape their life chances and that of their children. While such desires and fundamental rights are not acknowledged and addressed, the poor will continue to suffer; so will stabilization and democratization processes.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Afghanistan and its international partners should strengthen development policy, and implement strategies, that adopt a human rights-based approach so that the specific needs and conditions of poor Afghans are addressed.

In this regard:

- To better understand Afghans' needs and priorities and how to address these needs effectively, consult those directly affected. In this regard, data collection and analysis should be strengthened to enable a fair and objective assessment of who the people are behind the statistics and development indicators. Particular attention should be paid to the empowerment of women and others identified in the report who are among the least able to challenge the conditions that impoverish them.
- Build on existing successful models, such as the National Solidarity Programme, that capacitate concerned Afghans to make a meaningful contribution to poverty reduction strategies and programmes, and establish inclusive mechanisms so as to support ownership and sustainability of development initiatives.
- Measure the impact of poverty reduction initiatives by using the full and non-discriminatory enjoyment of human rights as an indicator for progress. In this regard, poverty reduction impact assessments should analyse how strategies and initiatives were developed and undertaken, as well as whether they contributed to the realization of human rights. Through inclusive and transparent processes, decision-makers should be held to account by the population.
- As a matter of priority, address impunity and corruption through fair and transparent processes, including the prosecution of corrupt and abusive officials. In this regard, Afghans and their public institutions, including Parliament, the media, and civil society organizations, should scrutinize the actions of the Government and its international partners to promote greater transparency and accountability.
- Redirect long-term development and institutions-building efforts to be within the purview of civilian actors and not linked to military strategy. In this regard, coordinated nationwide strategies and plans must be prioritized, along with Afghan capacity to deliver and own the development process.
- Define development initiatives in line with the priorities of the poor and not those of short-term military and political agendas.

- **ANNEX I: METHODOLOGY**

In Afghanistan, there is a lack of data on income poverty. As a result the level of household food insecurity is often used as a substitute indicator for poverty. Given this, the right to food was selected as one of the entry points to analyse who is poor and the reasons for this. A series of consultations were undertaken with field-based colleagues coupled with significant input from national and international NGOs and UN agencies. Relevant reports, including from media outlets, donors as well as other aid and development actors, were reviewed to help analyse the context and shape the direction of the research. An initial small scale survey, comprising 500 people from among the poorest communities, was conducted by our field staff in the provinces of Balkh, Badghis, Bayman, Dai Kundi, Ghor, Herat, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Nangahar, Nimroz, Paktia, Panshir Parwan, Takhar, and Uruzgan. To draw the sample frames, field staff consulted with government officials, different local councils members (Community Development Councils, district *shuras*, and so forth) and known community leaders and religious figures to identify the poor communities. Interviews were later held with randomly selected individuals within that sample frame. Questions were aimed at understanding whether individuals and households had access to adequate food, and what barriers existed to such access.

Over 100 key informant interviews were also conducted at field and Kabul-level to gain local experts' (Afghan government and non-government authorities) perspectives in regard to the needs of the poor communities, causes of poverty and solutions, and to learn more about existing policies and processes. The key informants include many government officials, community leaders, politicians and other representatives of the people at different levels, including Members of Parliament and Provincial Council members. These interviews were conducted individually or with groups of people sharing similar characteristics. As a method of cross-checking our primary research results, the issues were discussed with national and international experts, policy makers, academicians, donor agencies and other key stakeholders in the country. In addition, other sources, such as media reports, were used.

Using both a structured interview questionnaire and some open-ended questions, we asked local people specific questions about their perceptions of provincial authorities and central government. The exercise led to sharing significant insights supported by anecdotes, quotes, examples and arguments.

There was a significant gap between the numerical data and estimates given by those interviewed with that of officially released numbers. For official sources, we have reflected data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), and other sources including the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, UN agencies and national and international NGOs active in the country. Significant limitations in accessing information included security considerations and less access to female respondents. These limitations mean that the findings are not meant to be fully representative or comprehensive.

## ANNEX II: HUMAN RIGHTS AS A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE IN DEVELOPMENT

Human rights are those entitlements that are required to live in dignity and security; these include civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. All these rights must be enjoyed equally and without discrimination. In the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to development, process is important in order to achieve desired outcomes. The HRBA emphasizes underlying inequalities and discrimination which inhibit the development of the poorest as well as marginalized groups and those who are vulnerable to discrimination. The main elements of a HRBA are:

- *Participation* - People should be able to participate in the planning, design, monitoring and evaluation of decisions concerning their development.
- *Accountability* - Public officials must fulfil their mandates and are answerable to the people they serve. This also includes enhancing aid effectiveness through governmental accountability to the people and to the Parliament, and extends to external partners, such as donors.
- *Non-discrimination and attention to groups which are marginalized or vulnerable to discrimination* - Discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights is prohibited on any ground, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Under HRBA, vulnerable and marginalized groups must be prioritized. Accordingly, development data needs to be disaggregated in order to measure who in society enjoys which rights; this will allow for better design and interventions aimed at vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- *Transparency* – People need to have the necessary information about the decision-making process and who is accountable and responsible for what.
- *Empowerment* – People should have the power, knowledge, capacities, capabilities and access needed to change their own lives.

### Key disaggregated data relevant to human rights

Human rights analysis requires that the main demographic characteristics of a population are available in order to see which groups or individuals are not enjoying their rights. An HRBA requires this question to be answered locally: who is vulnerable, here and now? At a minimum data should be disaggregated by sex, age (older and children), and main population groups. In Afghanistan, other groups who are vulnerable to discrimination or those who are already disadvantaged include landless peasants; rural workers; rural unemployed; urban unemployed; urban poor; internally displaced people; returnees, persons with disabilities, and nomadic people. Any significant differences in the situation of men and women within each of these groups should also be reported on.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Rethinking Poverty, Report on the World Social Situation 2010*, New York 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008-2013 (ANDS), 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* See also *Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, Afghanistan Pilot Participatory Assessment (APPA)*, March 2008.

<sup>4</sup> National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007-08 (NRVA) and World Food Programme. In Afghanistan, the national poverty line has been historically determined by the food poverty line. Under this method, poverty lines are set by computing the level of consumption or income at which households are expected to satisfy the normative nutritional requirement. The Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) is also used, for example, in the ANDS. The CBN poverty line represents the level of per capita expenditure at which members of a household can be expected to meet their basic needs comprising food and non-food items.

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- <sup>5</sup> Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan; <http://www.moph.gov.af/en/news.php?id=55>
- <sup>6</sup> Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, *Call for Justice: A National Consultation on Past Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan*, 2005.
- <sup>7</sup> OHCHR's suggested changes to incorporate a rights-based perspective were not included. The final version of the Afghanistan Compact states under Economic and Social Development that "[t]he Afghan Government with the support of the international community will pursue high rates of sustainable economic growth with the aim of reducing hunger, poverty and unemployment."
- <sup>8</sup> Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan, *1388 Donors Financial Review*, November 2009, 9. Hamish Nixon, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Briefing Paper Series, *Aiding the State? International Assistance and the Statebuilding Paradox in Afghanistan*, April 2007, 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan, *ibid.* at 3.
- <sup>10</sup> Matt Waldman, published by Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), *Falling Short: Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan*, March 2008, 7.
- <sup>11</sup> Centre for Economic and Social Rights, *Human Rights and Reconstruction in Afghanistan*, May 2002, 27.
- <sup>12</sup> Afghanistan's 2009 Human Development Index value ranks 177 out of 178 countries on the list of low human development countries, worse than it was in 2007.
- <sup>13</sup> NRVA, 2007-08, *id.* note 4. This report uses population statistics issued by Afghanistan's Central Statistics Office (CSO) as this is the data that is officially recognized by the Government. UNFPA's population estimate is 28 million, which is used in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.
- <sup>14</sup> World Food Programme, 2009.
- <sup>15</sup> NRVA 2007-08, *id.* note 4, at 82.
- <sup>16</sup> Initial report of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2009.
- <sup>17</sup> Oxfam International, *Rethinking Disasters: Why death and destruction is not nature's fault but human failure*, 2008, 9-10. The effects of drought in the 1990s still impact the present state of food security and poverty, with 40 per cent of households reporting that they had to reduce their food consumption as a coping mechanism.
- <sup>18</sup> For those living in poverty, there is no functioning formal social safety net system, except limited pensions for people with disabilities and families of martyrs.
- <sup>19</sup> World Bank, *Voices of the Poor*, 2000.
- <sup>20</sup> Field research, 2009.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> Martine Van Bijlert, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Briefing Paper Series, *Between Discipline and Discretion Policies Surrounding Senior Subnational Appointments*, May 2009, 7.
- <sup>24</sup> See e.g., Afghanistan Human Development Report, *Bridging Modernity and Tradition, Rule of Law and the Search for Justice*, 2007, 8.
- <sup>25</sup> Field research, 2009.
- <sup>26</sup> World Bank, *Building an Effective State - Priorities for Public Administration Reform in Afghanistan*, June 2008.
- <sup>27</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as reported by the victims*, January 2010, 5 (finding that 43 per cent of respondents stated that national media rarely covers corruption, and in the South, two-thirds was almost never in the news).
- <sup>28</sup> Nai Media Group presentation on Cases of Murder, Injuries, Detention, Beating and Intimidation of Journalists in 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> UNAMA, Joint Monitoring of Political Rights: 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections reports <http://unama.unmissions.org>.
- <sup>30</sup> Field research, 2009.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* For instance, farmers in Sherzad district, Nangarhar Province, agreed to eradicate their poppies after being promised a road, an irrigation channel and a clinic. Over 1,000 farmers had their fields destroyed, but a year later, none of the commitments made to the population have been met, while on the other hand, local elders had received USD 1,000 each from the Governor.
- <sup>32</sup> International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), *Afghanistan Opinion Survey*, 2009, 2.
- <sup>33</sup> See UNAMA reports on protection of civilians, <http://unama.unmissions.org>.
- <sup>34</sup> ICRC, *id.* note 32.
- <sup>35</sup> UNAMA, Protection of Civilians Annual Report, 2008, <http://unama.unmissions.org>.
- <sup>36</sup> Field research, 2009.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, *Speaking Out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities*, 2003; Centre for Economic and Social Rights, *Human Rights and Reconstruction in Afghanistan*, 2002.

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- <sup>39</sup> Oxfam, *The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*, November 2009.
- <sup>40</sup> Field research, 2009.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Matt Waldman, *id.* note 10.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* See Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations and Subnational Expenditures in Afghanistan, August 2008 and CRS Report for Congress: The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11, updated February 8, 2008 (giving similar estimates of the development expenditure in Afghanistan; a total of USD100 million a day military spending versus USD7 million a day on development); see also Senlis Council, 2007, 23, [www.icosgroup.net/documents/taliban\\_politics\\_policy\\_paper.pdf](http://www.icosgroup.net/documents/taliban_politics_policy_paper.pdf)
- <sup>44</sup> Ministry of Finance, *id.* note 8, at 3 (this is significantly up from the under 40 per cent figure reported by ACBAR in 2008, at 3).
- <sup>45</sup> Department For International Development (DFID), *Country Program Evaluation: Afghanistan*, May 2009
- <sup>46</sup> Field research, 2009 (finding that 1,300 people in Balkh Province, were each paid Afs. 250 per day for 25 days under the food for work programme).
- <sup>47</sup> World Bank, *id.* note 25.
- <sup>48</sup> Field research, 2009.
- <sup>49</sup> Aunohita Mojumdar, *Afghanistan: Exclusionary Humanitarian Aid Practices Hitting Hearts and Minds*, in Eurasia Insight, 30 April 2009.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Ingrid Macdonald, Regional Protection and Advocacy Adviser, Norwegian Refugee Council.
- <sup>51</sup> U.S. Army Handbook, *Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapons System* suggesting that funds could be used "to win the hearts and minds of the indigenous population to facilitate defeating insurgents." April, 2009, cited in Andrew Wilder, *Money Can't Buy America Love*, Foreign Policy, 1 December 2009 (concluding that "reconstruction assistance seems in fact to be losing -- rather than winning -- hearts and minds. . . . Common complaints included: too little or nothing accomplished (despite in some cases considerable evidence all around of many recently implemented projects), a perception that other communities received more aid, very poor quality workmanship, the wrong kinds of projects for the setting, and the list goes on. However, the single overriding criticism of aid was the strong belief that it was fueling massive corruption, which undermined some of the positive impacts it may have otherwise had.")
- <sup>52</sup> Matt Waldman, A Briefing Paper by eleven NGOs operating in Afghanistan for the NATO Heads of State and Government Summit, 3-4 April 2009, *Caught in the Conflict: Civilians and the International Security Strategy in Afghanistan*, 2009, 5 (stating that funding available to PRTs exceeds the Afghan national budgets for health and education combined).
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 15. Congressional Budget Justification, Budget Justification, Fiscal Year 2009, South and Central Asia Overview, 556.
- <sup>54</sup> Matt Waldman, *id.* note 10, 13.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* at 5. Oxfam, *Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities*, 2008, 4 (noting that "Afghanistan's biggest donor, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) allocates close to half of its funds to five large US contractors in the country.")
- <sup>56</sup> Integrity Watch Afghanistan, *Afghanistan: Bringing Accountability Back In, From Subjects of Aid to Citizens of the State*, 2008, 5.
- <sup>57</sup> Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan, *Donors Financial Review*, January 2009, 9.
- <sup>58</sup> Statement of Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Afghanistan, to the Security Council, 6 January 2010.
- <sup>59</sup> Field research, 2009. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Mr. Olivier De Schutter, Press Release, "Political will needed to tackle food crisis and restructure agriculture," 18 September 2009 (stating that public policies needed to be geared to alleviating hunger and malnutrition and "[t]hat is different and more effective than the outdated and misplaced emphasis on increasing food production."). The challenge of affordability is compounded by many other factors, one such example being the taxation structure. Currently powdered milk, an important staple, is taxed at 17 per cent and passed on to the consumer, compared to 10 per cent for cigarettes. Thus, the tax has a disproportionately negative impact on the poor. Field research showed that the issue was not the availability of food as the markets stocked a variety of food items, the issue was that people surveyed could not afford the food. Khan Jan Alokozay, Deputy Head of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and industry (addressing a civil society in Kabul, December 2009.)
- <sup>60</sup> Dai Kundi Human Rights Based Approach to Development Workshops, District Official, Dai Kundi 2009.
- <sup>61</sup> Afghanistan Compact, Annex III.
- <sup>62</sup> Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, *Annual Report*, 2007.
- <sup>63</sup> International Crisis Group, *Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve*, 6 February 2008, 14.
- <sup>64</sup> Statement of Mr. Kai Eide, *id.* note 57; see also, Afghanistan, The London Conference, 28 January 2010.

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<sup>65</sup> Matt Waldman, *id.* note 10, Figure 4, 14-15. The Government's over-centralized decision-making has been challenged as it contributes to problems such as the prioritization of projects without regard to the needs of the community and creates implementation bottlenecks. Nevertheless, more delegated or decentralized authority to the provincial authorities is not without concern given widespread corruption and other examples of abuse of power and the lack of accountability mechanisms.

<sup>66</sup> Field research, 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), *Fourth Report on the Situation of Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*, December 2009. There are significant disparities in the geographical distribution of aid. This is due to a range of factors, but not least because aid is being used to achieve military or political objectives. The most insecure provinces of Nimroz, Helmand, Zabul, Kandahar and Uruzgan have been allocated more than USD200 per person, whereas many other provinces are due to receive less than half this amount, and some, such as Sari Pul or Takhar, are allocated less than one third.

Matt Waldman, *id.* note 10, 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> E/CN.4/Sub.2/2004/44, para. 56.

<sup>69</sup> AIHRC, *id.* note 67. NRVA 2007-08, *id.* note 4.

<sup>70</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_50072.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_50072.html).

<sup>71</sup> NRVA 2007-2008, *id.* note 4, 25.

<sup>72</sup> UNAMA/OHCHR, *Silence is Violence: End the Abuse of Women in Afghanistan*, 8 July 2009.

<sup>73</sup> Field research, 2009 (finding that most of the women interviewed by UNAMA/OHCHR had no idea about the price of main food items like wheat and how much of that wheat the household consumes in a specific time period).

<sup>74</sup> NRVA 2007-2008, *id.* note 4.

<sup>75</sup> ANDS, *id.* note 2, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Integrity Watch Afghanistan, *id.* note 56, 26.

<sup>77</sup> The National Solidarity Programme is a notable exception.

<sup>78</sup> Amy Frumin, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Equipping USAID for Success: A Field Perspective*, June 2009, 23.

<sup>79</sup> Field research, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> Matt Waldman, *id.* note 10, 13.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* at 13 and CARE International, *Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan, Risks and Measures for Successful Mitigation*, September 2009, 52.

<sup>82</sup> Field research, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.* note 16, paras. 151 and 347.

<sup>84</sup> NRVA, 2007-2008, *id.* note 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Field research, 2009.

<sup>87</sup> This was based on a survey by Handicap International Parul Bakhshi, Jean François Trani, Cécile Rolland, *Conducting Surveys on Disability: A Comprehensive Toolkit, National Survey on Disability in Afghanistan, 2005*, published in 2006 by Handicap International <http://www.handicap-international.fr/fileadmin/documents/publications/ConductingSurveysOnDisability.pdf> Note that another HI study indicates 2.6 per cent of the population is disabled. <http://www.handicap-international.fr/bibliographie-handicap/7Donnees/RapportEtude/understandingChallengeAhead.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> NRVA 2007-08, *id.* note 4, 88.

<sup>89</sup> Field research, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report, 2005, 40.

<sup>91</sup> Field research, 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Naila Kabeer, *Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals: Promoting Women's Capabilities and Participation*, 2003, at 2-3 citing Gita Sen, *Alternative economics from a gender perspective*, 1995.