

**STOCKHOLM GROUP FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**A Thematic Evaluation  
of the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. Initiative  
in Afghanistan**

***DRAFT***

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## THEMATIC EVALUATION OF THE P.E.A.C.E. INITIATIVE

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## PREFACE

### **Mission Context**

1. The thematic evaluation of the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative (PI) was planned as the second leg of a more general evaluation of the PI constituent projects. It was to follow closely upon the sectoral and technical reviews of the progress made by the individual projects and of the results obtained against the original sectoral targets. Because of developments on the ground affecting security and programme activities, the thematic evaluation has been delayed for over a year, with the result that the technical reviews are now somewhat dated. More recent progress reports allow however for current updating of project results and have moreover the advantage of providing a longer time-span over which to assess the validity of thematic aspects and assumptions.
2. Rather than being seen as an exercise designed to examine the basic programme objectives mid-course, with a view to making any policy adjustments called for, the present thematic evaluation is taking place towards the end of the scheduled duration of the programme. It can therefore be an equally useful input in the next phase of the programme and guide for the allocation of fresh resources. The terms of reference of the Mission are reproduced in Annex A.

### **Mission Organization and Itinerary**

3. As an independent exercise, the thematic evaluation was entrusted to the Stockholm Group for Development Studies (SGDS), a private consultancy firm specialized in studies and other assignments related to development cooperation, mainly in the social sectors. For the purpose of the Afghan Mission, SGDS enlisted the services of

Mr. Bernt Bernander, as team leader, having wide experience of UN development work in crisis countries, state reform and institutional development;

Mr. Alexander Costy, whose areas of expertise include conflict prevention and peace-building, community participation and the work of non-governmental organizations;

and Ms. Farhana Faruqi, with expertise in social development, who was recruited in Islamabad by UNDP and associated with the Mission to research specific gender aspects of the programme.

4. The Mission assembled in Islamabad on 16 August 1999 and spent the first week receiving detailed briefings by project management staff and in discussions with staff of the Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator on the basis of a methodological outline prepared by the Mission in advance. It further consulted representatives of UN agencies present in Islamabad as well as of a number of interested donor countries.
5. The Mission subsequently traveled to the provinces of Kandahar, Kabul, Badakhshan, Herat and Farah, spending in all three weeks in the field to visit project locations and

to consult national project staff, outposted staff of UN agencies, representatives of NGOs and implementing partners, target groups and individual beneficiaries. The visit to Kandahar was curtailed as a consequence of a powerful truck bomb explosion in the city and attempt on the life of the Taliban leader; reduced time in the Kandahar districts was compensated for by allocating more time to other PI focus areas. In all, seven focus districts were visited, one non-focus district, where all PI partners are present, and three urban focus areas. Groups and persons consulted are listed in Annex B.

6. Between field visits to Afghanistan and at the end of the assignment, the Mission spent further time in Islamabad for consultations with various bodies and for report writing. It submitted its draft report to the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator on 21 September.

### **Acknowledgements**

7. The Mission takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to all persons met for openly and candidly sharing their views, for all their courtesies and help. In particular, the assistance of UNDP in organizing the field visits, in setting up appointments and in providing accommodation and transportation, was essential for the conduct of the evaluation and is gratefully acknowledged.
8. Special mention should be made of the in-country Afghan staff of the different projects and their implementing partners, who spent long hours with the Mission members and did everything in their power to accommodate their needs. The Mission also wishes to extend its thanks to the many community leaders, members of development committees and common interest groups with whom it met. Their enthusiasm and motivation to overcome all obstacles in a difficult programme environment were unmistakable. The lion's share of the credit for project accomplishments in the PI areas rests with them.

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The P.E.A.C.E. Initiative (PI) in Afghanistan was launched in 1997 in an effort to provide programme coherence to the activities of five rehabilitation and development projects financed by UNDP and carried out under various project denominations over the last 6-10 years.
2. The projects concerned were implemented by three different UN agencies, FAO, UNHCS (Habitat) and UNOPS. Despite the different technical orientation of these projects (crop production and livestock development in the case of FAO, urban reconstruction in the case of Habitat, rural rehabilitation and a programme targeting disabled Afghans in the case of UNOPS), their activities were seen to serve common objectives and to be adopting similar approaches. The unifying elements were the alleviation of poverty and the empowerment of local communities, and by extension the overarching objectives of peace-building and good governance.
3. With the launching of the PI, poverty alleviation and community empowerment were accordingly made explicit programme goals, with subsidiary objectives relating to food security, access to social services and to livelihood opportunities. Special attention was paid to the affirmation of women's rights, to providing assistance to the very poor and to marginalised groups, to the ongoing environmental degradation, as well as to the sustainability of programme outcomes and of the community mobilization undertaken.
4. To improve programme impact, cohesion of approach and operational synergies, the PI programme was confined to 26 rural districts (originally 23) and 6 urban areas of Afghanistan, selected principally in terms of accessibility and ethnic and political balance. Scant presence of other aid actors and "high impact" potential were other criteria used for district selection.
5. Sectoral work in the various projects was reviewed in the second quarter of 1998. A thematic evaluation to assess how the programme was responding to overall goals and strategies was to follow shortly thereafter. Because of events on the ground, disrupting security and programme activities in several areas, this evaluation could only be carried out a year after it was planned.
6. Despite these disruptions, the programme has continued to deliver an impressive package of assistance interventions in the various PI focus areas as well as outside these areas. On the basis of current report updates, the record of achievements is detailed in Chapter III; these are in turn linked to PI objectives, gender strategies and approaches to community mobilization and the generation of resources for income-earning by groups and individuals.
7. The assessment of programme impact is made difficult by the fact that the individual projects contribute to the overall objectives in different ways. Secondly, no

systematic attempt has been made to select *a priori* a set of meaningful indicators measuring progress towards the main objectives, which are expressed in very general terms. As far as possible, the Mission has attempted to break down these objectives in measurable components. Thus, poverty alleviation is seen as a composite of food security, access to education and health, shelter, safe water and sanitation, and to income-generating opportunities. Quantitative project outcomes are related to the separate themes, and further analyzed in qualitative terms.

8. As far as programme synergies are concerned, the Mission observed that these are in fact stronger in the field, where they appear to be needs-driven and programme-inspired. Many of these synergies have developed despite the prolonged absence of international staff, and in most areas, the sense of common programme identity among national staff is strong.
9. Synergies are not limited to the agencies immediately concerned with the PI programme, and examples of field-level cooperation with outside actors, such as WFP, UNICEF and WHO, are frequent and productive. In addition, support from some 10 bilateral funding agencies has effectively reinforced specific activities in crop production, animal health, and rural and urban infrastructure, undertaken by PI partners both inside and outside focus areas.
10. In the area of gender differentiation, the Mission recognizes the difficulties inherent in mainstreaming gender at the programme level. Individual project contributions in this regard are therefore assessed at the local level. The general discussion of the stated UN principles regarding gender parity has without doubt sensitized project staff to the problem. Opportunities to reach women that might otherwise not be exploited are accordingly pursued. Like most other agencies, PI partner organizations tend to follow a pragmatic course, seizing local opportunities as they arise. Nonetheless, there is scope for integrating a more comprehensive gender strategy into PI programming.
11. With regard to community mobilization, the three PI agencies involved have adopted different approaches for engaging the recipient communities. In all, over 2,100 separate community-based organizations, common interest associations and farmers' groups have been established or activated with the support of the PI programme, almost half of them consisting of village, cluster village and district *shuras* in a system of pyramid representation. Some 170 of these community-based organizations are formed by women, and there are 15 "mixed" organizations. To the extent that such formations do not confront or contradict one another, the Mission believes that pursuing uniformity of methods, as is sometimes suggested, would not be in the interest of the programme.
12. Likewise, different micro-credit and revolving fund arrangements have been set up by the various projects, in support of income generation, privatization, improved seed multiplication, support for vulnerable groups, as a means of community empowerment. Village funds are modest in size and mainly used for small income-

generating projects. Some district funds may however reach the equivalent of US\$ 15,000 and are used for substantial agricultural programmes. On this score, the Mission also holds that there is virtue in diversity, but that greater efforts should be made to generate comparative data with a view to optimizing the various conditions under which credit is extended.

13. In all essentials, the PI programme consists of what is commonly known as area development schemes, which have become current in many parts of the world during the past 15 years. The Mission believes that area-based programmes have a given place at this time in Afghanistan, where social and economic structures are in ruins and government institutions in a state of collapse. The targeting of local communities derives from the compelling logic of the situation in the country as a whole and the actual needs on the ground. There are few other realistic options, in extending rehabilitation and development support beyond the humanitarian effort.
14. Action at the local level further probably offers the best prospects at the present juncture of addressing some of the critical issues confronting Afghan society, such as gender discrimination, environmental decline in rural and urban areas, the expanding cultivation of poppy, as well as the capacity for self-help and local governance.
15. Region-based common programming under the aegis of the proposed regional coordination bodies (RCB) and guided by the Strategic Framework can provide the necessary cohesion of humanitarian and development action on a wider basis, integrating area-focused schemes in the separate regional programmes. In this context, the Mission takes the view that focus district selection criteria, as well as the selection itself, should be part of the common programming process, and that the final decision on the selection of focus areas should be taken at the level of the APB. Since area development schemes should not be seen as open-ended, criteria for phasing out support should also be adopted.
16. In the final resort, the future of the PI hinges on the question of the funding that UNDP, multilateral and bilateral donors can make available in the period ahead. To the extent that UNDP is compelled to reduce its funding of sectoral programmes, it should however attempt to maintain the delivery mechanism and management structure that has been established. This is an important resource for the future and should be safeguarded. At the same time, increased bilateral contributions need to be sought for sectoral and other programme inputs to ensure that the delivery mechanism remains cost-efficient.
17. Overall, the Mission holds that programme methods and approaches are basically sound. Considerable synergies have been created, not only through the cooperation of participating agencies, but also with agencies operating outside the PI framework. As detailed in the report, a valid contribution is being made to combat widespread rural and urban poverty. Communities are being mobilized for self-help along different tracks and their organizations should be allowed to develop their potentials. Different methods are being tested, opening up livelihood opportunities.

18. Among the beneficiary communities, social processes have been set in motion which create new coping mechanisms and enhanced resilience. These capacities for community participation and organization should be built on further in the interest of making them fully sustainable for the long term. From the donor perspective, the PI programme offers an established operational link able to give effect to longer term development strategies and a ready management and technical capacity for delivering sectoral programmes in specific geographic areas.
19. In conclusion, the Mission recommends that the PI programme should be carried forward for another two-year period. In this connection a number of associated recommendations are made to strengthen and revitalize the effort. These relate to such subjects as impact indicators and the introduction of more structured monitoring, in a qualitative sense, of cross-cutting operational approaches, such as gender differentiation, community organization and income generation targeting the most disadvantaged groups of Afghan society.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

### **General**

1. The scope and method of the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative<sup>1</sup> (PI) in Afghanistan has an interest that goes well beyond the audience of those immediately concerned with the Afghan programme, be they donors, UN agencies or NGOs. As an approach to development cooperation, it is potentially of interest to the aid community as a whole, in particular to donors and agencies confronting post-conflict settings in many parts of the world. Often cited as a prototype of a "failed state", Afghanistan represents a situation where central institutions of governance have broken down and traditional local structures have ceased to function. Stated briefly, the thematic evaluation of the PI should attempt to answer the question to what extent international assistance using decentralized approaches can effectively contribute to peace-building, to the process of normalization, the restoration of the rule of law and good governance.
2. Given the virtual absence of a national coordinating authority, the review of the thematic underpinnings of the PI is furthermore significant, as donors, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, governmental and non-governmental, have made special efforts under UN leadership to harmonize their actions in Afghanistan. Agreement has been reached on the elements of a common assistance strategy for the country, and there has been a decision in principle to move towards common programming, for which the PI provides valuable operational experience.
3. Interest in decentralized approaches is not confined to crisis countries facing weak central administrations. Many developing countries enjoying a stable social and economic environment have recognized the need for establishing viable local government structures and adopted deliberate policies to strengthen local, district and provincial level entities and to provide them with the resources that can make local decision-making a reality for participating communities. Even in this broader context, the work in Afghanistan adds to the ever-increasing body of experience that is relevant to such goals.

### **Genesis and rationale of the PI**

4. The individual projects comprising the PI have a relatively long history, going back 8-10 years. With the passage of time project denominations have changed and the scope and focus of their operations have been transformed, moving away from the early emphasis on humanitarian concerns and support for repatriating refugees to more sustainable rehabilitation and development, centered on local communities. While executed by three different agencies, FAO, UNHCS and UNOPS, they have

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<sup>1</sup> ) The acronym P.E.A.C.E. stands for Poverty Eradication And Community Empowerment and is presumably, at least in part, intended to catch the eye of donors. Translated into Pashtu or Dari no similar combination is possible. Locally, it is therefore given the meaning of "peace" and referred to as the Peace Programme, or simply as the UN programme.

received core funding on a continuing basis from UNDP, supplemented with cost-sharing and trust fund contributions from a variety of sources.

5. In general, aid agencies were responding in the only way possible to the troubled conditions created by the prolonged warfare and deteriorating central authority that followed the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989. Virtually all assistance has been directed to local levels. Community-based programmes in areas of relative or intermittent peace where delivery of assistance was feasible were progressively expanded. While conceived in a national setting as responding to apparent needs in different areas, projects were however carried out as stand-alone efforts, pursuing individual sectoral goals, even when using similar approaches.
6. An assistance regime of remote control has persisted, inherited from the earlier cross-border operations from Pakistan and imposed by the unsettled conditions within Afghanistan. The ebb and flow of factional strife continued to make for operational separation of activities according to their humanitarian or development content. NGOs constituted the principal vehicle for delivering both humanitarian aid and local level assistance aiming at the rehabilitation of community assets, principally village infrastructure of all kinds, as well as of ad hoc social services. Efforts were at the same time made to enlist the participation of beneficiaries in programme decisions affecting their communities.
7. These approaches were taken a step further with the launching of the PI in May 1997. This followed an international forum held in Ashkabad, which forged a consensus among donors and aid agencies as to the purposes and method of international assistance to Afghanistan. Peace-building was seen as the overarching objective, supported by a comprehensive and more long-term approach integrating humanitarian, rehabilitation, development and human rights endeavours. These should address the concerns and needs at the community level and support Afghan civil society in its various forms. An evaluation of the UNDP-funded projects carried out in 1996 had reached similar conclusions, accenting their common features and their potential contributions towards peace-building objectives.
8. Already, under UNOCHA and UNDP coordination, joint programmatic and logistical support for the activities of the various implementing UN agencies and partner NGOs had been organized. Common approaches were reinforced by the amalgamation of the coordinating functions of UNOCHA and UNDP in early 1997. A set of principles and conditions that should underlie UN assistance was promulgated by UN headquarters in an attempt to achieve policy consistency. Policy coordination was subsequently strengthened with the adoption of a Strategic Framework providing a common policy reference for international support to Afghanistan.
9. In connection with the PI launching, a compilation of base-line socio-economic profiles of each proposed PI district was made. Essentially, this however recorded information that was already outdated and proved to be of limited value for indicator measurement. UNDP also sponsored a series of stakeholder workshops, which were

held in Islamabad, Kandahar and Mazar to identify constraints and to develop common strategies and approaches. These dealt with topics such as operational integration, gender aspects, as well as relations with the authorities, other UN agencies and NGOs. A review meeting of staff from all agencies involved in the PI programme was organized about six months later to build consensus on best practices. In the following, UNDP appears to have been less proactive in further refining policies and operational aspects of the programme.

10. The PI has now been operative for over two years. Its overall objective is predicated on the assumption that there is a direct and indirect correlation between peace-building and conflict prevention on the one hand and, on the other, human welfare, poverty alleviation, community empowerment, improved governance and the observation of human rights. As rural and urban environments are likely to condition these relationships in different ways, the projects included in the PI focus on both rural and urban areas. A more complete description of the PI, drawn from the original programme document formulated in early 1997, is attached as Annex C.
11. The PI is also based on the premise that, over and above the geographic overlap of the five constituent projects, their common and shared objectives are sufficiently strong to give them the character of an integrated programme. On the basis of that hypothesis, their implementation should in theory forge more effective and sustainable linkages in terms of reconciliation, peace-building and good governance as the ultimate goals.

### **Methodological aspects**

12. The present evaluation attempts, to the extent possible, to establish where these linkages lie and how they have been articulated or found expression since the inception of the Programme. Each of the five PI projects are examined in turn in Chapter III, looking at the progress made in terms of outcomes and impact, as anticipated in the original formulation and updated following the internal evaluations carried out in 1998.
13. Thematic evaluations usually call for considerable synthesis and tend to carry with them high levels of abstraction, qualitative assessments, relationships that are taken as axiomatic but are empirically unproven, as well as elements of conjecture. An attempt is made to avoid the pitfall of excessive generalization and abstraction, as this might render the evaluation less useful as a lessons-learned exercise. As evidenced by the individual project evaluations, it must however be recognized that there is a dearth of baseline indicators, making impact measurement difficult. Recent macro-economic data are furthermore lacking. It is therefore not possible, perhaps in the majority of cases, to document adequately statements of outcomes and impact.
14. To facilitate quantification, the concept and objective of poverty alleviation is as far as possible broken down in measurable components identified by the Mission and listed at the start of Chapter III. Similarly, community empowerment is assessed in

terms of the growth and activity of community-based organizations, in particular of the work of *shuras* at village, village cluster and district levels, community fora, community-based rehabilitation committees, and common interest groups.

15. Institutions of local governance promoted or created from scratch are an important area of investigation, considering the political implications vis-a-vis existing or future political and religious authorities, as well as the internal political dynamics involved in their creation at the community level.
16. In Chapter IV the relevance of PI objectives are examined in the light of a number of cross-cutting factors, concepts and strategies, as applicable to the different projects, such as the issues of geographic coverage, common implementation mechanisms, gender differentiation, and sustainability.
17. Institutional interaction and other linkages are explored in Chapter V, which attempts to assess how the PI programme relates to fragmentation of political authority, to coordination arrangements at field and headquarters levels, to the political peace-making process, to NGOs and to selected field programmes.
18. By way of conclusion, the role of area-based approaches in the pursuit of sector-specific project objectives and overarching PI goals, as well as development priorities set out in the Strategic Framework and common programme documents, are discussed. Its potential for replication and expansion is further reviewed in the context of present and future funding possibilities.

### III. PROGRAMME RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. This section of the report follows on from the four internal evaluations conducted during 1998 to update the results and achievements under the PI. To maintain clarity, a description of the objectives, targets, actions and partnerships of each programme is provided. In keeping with the methodological framework adopted by the Mission, the achievements of the five PI programmes are assessed according to following general criteria. These are applied with variable emphasis according to the area focus and stated objectives of each programme. They are:
  - ❑ Improvements in food security
  - ❑ Improvements in access to services
  - ❑ Improvements in sustainable livelihoods
  - ❑ Improvements in community ownership and participation
  - ❑ Attention to gender and vulnerable groups in the distribution of programme benefits
2. A comprehensive impact assessment of programme actions is constrained by the paucity and inconsistency of baseline information on the socio-economic situation in the target areas. In order to arrive at an informed judgement on programme impacts, available data are supplemented by insights gained through extensive consultations in 7 PI districts and 3 urban areas.

#### **a) Strengthening The Self-Help Capacities Of Rural Communities**

##### **Summary project description**

3. Community participation was a prominent feature of ARRP predecessor programmes. Under the PI, participatory ownership of the development process has become the primary objective of implementation. Programme resources are deployed to build sustainable participatory structures at the local level which, ideally, work beyond the scope of external assistance and extend into other areas of local governance.
4. Empowerment strategies hinge on the (re) activation of community organisations, supported by credit/income generation schemes and infrastructure projects. Some 62 per cent of programme resources are expended on infrastructure work in the irrigation, water and transport sectors, and 16 per cent in social services. Community contributions, mainly in labour, cash and kind, are estimated at \$1,6 million, against the programme's own expenditures of \$ 8 million.
5. Stated programme objectives are as follows:
  - ❑ Foster representative community participation by supporting effective local decision making and capacity building

- Improve living conditions by supporting sustainable action in the field of productive and social infrastructure, access, and natural resource management.

### Mid-term review findings

6. The 1998 mid-term review confirmed ARRPs progress in moving towards PI objectives, despite security and programme constraints. The review issued 27 recommendations covering all aspects of the programme. Of these seven recommendations have been addressed directly to varying degrees. Four retain particular salience:
  - Implement a participatory planning process at regional and district levels. This has been addressed in three ways in the Southern region: a) by planning workshops, b) by seeking PI partners' consensus on project summaries, and c) by involving village councils in project monitoring. The strength of regional planning remains uneven. Full deployment of RCOs, when this occurs, should further strengthen the process.
  - Improve existing reporting performance through staff training and feedback. Measures taken include: a) the development of new reporting and record-keeping formats, and b) the commissioning of an impact assessment to be undertaken by a national implementing partner (Guardians). Consistent, quality cross-regional reporting nonetheless remains problematic.
  - Improve monitoring and reporting of social development activities. An in-depth study is currently being prepared on local revolving fund mechanisms. Though late in coming, this should produce new insights on how to improve the effectiveness of funds managed by the local committees.
  - Balance the role of community organisations and staff in programme design. The technical feasibility of projects is appraised by programme staff in consultation with local committees. This process can be further reinforced at the regional programming level with greater emphasis on social services and gender strategies.
7. **Food security/nutrition:** Improvements to food security relate to programme activities in the areas of irrigation roads, improved seeds distribution and income generation. In this connection:
  - 140 canal structures have been rebuilt, producing increases of 20-100% in agricultural output
  - 280 km of secondary access roads have been rehabilitated
  - Over 700 MT of improved wheat seed purchased and distributed by district *shuras* with support from the FAO crop production component
  - Household gardens have been created to expand available food varieties and enhance nutritional intake



13. Measuring the success and impact of community development activities is difficult given the qualitative nature of results sought. Quantitative targets for the formation of community committees have been achieved in the Southern districts. Progress has been slower elsewhere. Three qualitative indicators have been developed which show a positive trend towards greater self-reliance and organisational capacity among recipient communities. These are:
- Sustained interest of local residents in committee meetings, as measured by rates of participation. Participation is reported to exceed 75 per cent.
  - Greater participation in planning, implementation and post-project management of inputs. Participation appears stronger in the Southern regions where the community-building process is more mature. Maintenance committees have been formed to manage facilities and improved roads, but there is no concrete record of their performance.
  - An increase in spontaneous community organisation around activities and opportunities not directly covered by the programme. In the 10 Southern districts where this indicator has been used, 160 communities have undertaken independent activities, and 225 have approached other aid organisations for support.
14. The committees serve as a nexus for needs assessment, credit provision, income generation and training for other PI partner activities, most prominently for the improved seed multiplication programme, and to a lesser extent the CDAP and livestock programmes. In one peri-urban district of Kabul, local committees have helped Habitat to identify beneficiaries for its shelter recycling scheme.
15. Though faced with significant cultural obstacles, the women's *shuras* with which the Mission came into contact appear particularly successful in identifying avenues for community organisation and entrepreneurship.
16. **Access to credit:** Local committees manage 85 revolving funds to support crop, livestock and other income generating activities, frequently with direct technical support from competent PI partner agencies. ARRP also reports the operation of small-scale credit facilities in 120 villages, covering 1440 household beneficiaries in the 10 Southern districts. In the Central region, 24 credit and income-generation sub-projects are reportedly ready for implementation.
17. Larger district funds are supported primarily by agricultural and transport earnings (seed production, tractor rental, busing services). In Farah, the Mission found that revolving funds were sensibly invested in the resale of improved wheat seed varieties (with FAO-Crops support), for which there is a strong demand.

## Overall Assessment

18. Arguably, food security has improved in areas covered by the programme, although there is no quantified information to confirm this. The identification of chronic food-deficit areas is not a specific criterion of district selection, a point raised by WFP in Kandahar province. Closer collaboration with the WFP “VAM” unit would help the programme to better identify food security priorities and gauge actual impact.
19. Improved access to social services, particularly in health, remains a weak link of the programme. ARRP currently invests just under 6 per cent of overall resources in the sector, despite its importance to general development objectives and salience for women in the Afghan context. At the time of writing, ARRP has no in-house programming capacity for its health-related activities.
20. The *shura* system is structured as an apex organisation, whereby the interests of up to 120 villages are represented by a small number of individuals through executive committees (EC), with which ARRP and other PI partners interact at the programming level. Over time, there is potential for increasing distance between the EC decision-makers and their village constituencies. A mechanism for regular rotation of EC members would ensure proper representation in the middle and longer term, particularly of vulnerable social groups and marginal villages.
21. Local committees show a tendency to prioritise agriculture and other income-earning activities over social service rehabilitation (health, education). This derives from rural community preferences and, arguably, from ARRP's own programming pattern of low social sector investment. Importantly, the relative under-prioritisation of social services may relate to the absence of direct representation of women in the committee system. An appropriate sectoral balance should be maintained between local interests as expressed by the (overwhelmingly male) *shuras*, and objective social needs.
22. Record-keeping of financial transactions by local and district *shuras* appears regular and transparent. This should be followed up by enhanced training, reporting and impact analysis by ARRP staff, particularly as concerns credit distribution and access by vulnerable groups.
23. By local standards, district revolving funds involve comparatively large, and growing sums of money. Ongoing vigilance is necessary to ensure that conflicts of interest between the several actors and levels of authority are minimised, and that benefits are distributed equitably.

## Food Security through Sustainable Crop Production

### Summary project description

24. With over 80 percent of Afghanistan's population engaged in agricultural pursuits, land productivity has an immediate bearing on food security, whether looked at nationally or by region, some of them situated in remote areas of difficult access. Total area under cultivation is estimated at some 7.5 million ha, of which 3.5 million ha are irrigated land. The prolonged warfare has severely disrupted farming systems that have suffered the consequences of the breakdown in the supply of inputs, poor maintenance of irrigation systems and the ravages of plant disease.
25. The project carries forward emergency rehabilitation activities which started 10 years ago and which are rated to have helped stave off an even more disastrous deterioration of the farming sector and to restore a measure of self-sufficiency in cereal production. Average farm yields appear to have bottomed out in 1989 and reverted to pre-war values, but these yields are still low. National and local food deficits are substantial. As currently designed, project work places increased emphasis on the in-country production of improved seed and planting material, as well as on training and demonstration.
26. Project activities are not confined to PI areas, and continue in altogether 253 districts. As far as the PI is concerned, the project stresses community-based approaches through the formation of participatory farmer groups and aims at building up a privatized seed industry. At the local level, it has been effective at empowering district *shuras*, and by its very nature, has strong linkages with work to stimulate employment creation, seed production, the repair of irrigation infrastructure, income generation and other social and economic activities in rural areas.
27. To advance the overall objective of improving food security and self-reliance, as well as of alleviating rural poverty, the project's immediate purposes are to
  - promote food security and income generation through improved access to agricultural inputs and skills;
  - develop the capacity of farmers and grower associations to minimize crop losses in the post-harvest handling, processing and marketing of agricultural produce;
  - raise standards of agricultural technology, through capacity-building and training.
28. The project is financed for a 30-month duration, ending in December 1999, through a contribution from UNDP core funds in the amount of US\$ 6.3 million. Associated funding from Sida and the European Union amounts to US\$ 6.8 million.

### Mid-term review findings

29. While stressing that land productivity increases can only result from a long-term effort, the internal evaluation in 1998 concluded that the project maintained high standards in all its activities, and in meeting international criteria for improved seed production. It had given significant impetus to the establishment of privately owned nurseries, improving horticultural practices, and was demonstrating innovative methods in plant disease control through its Integrated Pest Management programme.
30. In the PI focus areas, the project was successfully addressing the demand for improved seed by involving community-based committees in the seed multiplication and distribution work, generating resources for *shuras* and farmer groups and promoting the use of improved seed on a self-sustaining basis through simple credit and advance purchase options.
31. In endorsing project efforts to raise standards of husbandry and management through training, using the Farmer Field Schools approach, the mid-term review emphasized that the results be formally monitored and analyzed to guide future work and that the project intensify its women's programme.
32. The review recommended that the operational approaches of in the three main functional components, i.e. seed production, horticulture and plant protection, be continued and strengthened. The parallel project engaged in variety selection of spring and winter cereals as well as vegetable crops, should be incorporated as a fourth functional area.
33. The project was urged to take specific steps to devise more accurate benchmarks for monitoring progress in a more precise and formal manner and for assessing its impact in each of the functional areas. A detailed review of the Farmers Field School training operations was furthermore recommended with a view to improving the transfer of technologies at the farm level.
34. In the area of seed production, the review recommended that two seed production units (one farmer owned and one NGO owned) be privatized before the end of 1998 so that their operations could be assessed before the end of the project.

### Outcomes relevant to impact of PI objectives

35. **Food security:** Overall, cereal yields per hectare in Afghanistan remain low and the potential for productivity increases is significant. In particular, more widespread use of certified seed can yield substantial benefits in terms of food security. As a rule of the thumb, and other inputs of irrigation and fertilizer being equal, average yields per unit of land can be trebled by using improved seed. In general farmers are well aware of the value of improved seed and demand far outstrips supply. The following indicators are relevant to the project's contribution to better food security:

- ❑ Cumulative in-country production of 930 MT of foundation seed (wheat, rice, pulses, maize and barley), reducing imports to 55 MT in 1998
- ❑ Cumulative in-country multiplication of quality seed amounts to 20,946 MT, through over 4,500 contracted seed producers, wheat accounting for 65 per cent of total seed production
- ❑ For the 1997-98 production, 6,865 MT of fertilizer was distributed to contract growers along with the foundation seed
- ❑ In 1998, improved wheat seed was distributed 13,656 farmers in different regions, at cost, through credit arrangements or farmer-to-farmer exchanges
- ❑ Targeting household food security, 172 fruit tree nurseries, each capable of distributing 10,000 tree saplings, have been established, 63 of which in PI areas. 44 vegetable seed growers have established vegetable seed production plots.

36. **Access to education:** A modified version of the farmers' field school system has been applied by the project and is functioning in 43 districts. It uses volunteer community trainers, supported by district trainers who are paid and provided with motorcycles and who work under the supervision of national project personnel. Relevant indicators are:

- ❑ About 40,000 farmers are reported to have had access to demonstrations showing the effect of treating seed to prevent seed-borne diseases in cereals
- ❑ 775 persons have attended 3-7 days technical training workshops, as trainers, on integrated plant protection and nursery and orchard management at various locations in the country.

37. **Access to livelihood opportunities:** The project is imaginatively exploiting the demand for improved cereal and vegetable seed to provide resources for community-based micro-credit systems managed by district *shuras*. This approach has been adopted in PI focus areas and serves the purpose not only of expanding the use of improved seed but also of resourcing other income-generating activities among community members. Nursery development is by now to a large extent a private sector activity. Some relevant indicators are:

- ❑ The distribution of improved seed in PI focus areas is carried out through village and district *shuras*, enabling these to act as seed bankers and invest the proceeds from the initial grant to extend further credit to farmers to cover their needs of input supplies. Proceeds are also used to establish income-generating schemes benefiting the community as a whole and to assist landless poor. To date, over US\$ 140,000 equivalent has been accumulated for such purposes in PI focus areas
- ❑ In all, 269 private fruit tree and vegetable nurseries have been established in 22 provinces, along with 7 project-based mother stock nurseries, from where imported and selected local plant material is distributed.

38. **Gender differentiation:** The project has limited opportunities of addressing the special needs of women, as participants. Work has however been done to promote the establishment of kitchen gardens, and to initiate sericulture and apiculture activities, often carried out in cooperation with other agencies such as Habitat, ARRP and NGOs.
39. **Community empowerment:** Project focus is on establishing relationships with farmer groups, such as contract growers of improved seed, and through the Farmers' Field School approach. In the PI areas of Kandahar and Farah, it has had a significant impact in using district *shuras* as instruments for organizing and managing the distribution of seed, building up community-owned revolving funds. These are in turn applied for expanding the use of improved seed as well as for making loans to landless and poor for income-generating activities. Some relevant indicators are:
- In the two growing seasons 1997-99, 750 MT of foundation seed was entrusted to 17 PI district *shuras* along with 795 MT of fertilizer, which was sold to contract growers in cash or on credit. Almost 7,000 farmers have benefited from the use of improved seed, reportedly doubling their production
  - More than US\$ 140,000 have been accumulated by these district *shuras* and are available to them for further seed multiplication operations and for other community-sponsored projects
  - In three districts of the Farah Province, *shuras* have available for rental to farmers 42 items of agricultural machinery, 12 of which have been purchased from funds the communities have themselves established

### Overall assessment

40. The project is judged to have had a significant impact by establishing systems for the in-country production and distribution of improved seed varieties of the principal crops, reducing imports to minimal levels. While only a small fraction of all farmers in Afghanistan have access to this improved seed, the situation varies from region to region, and there has been definite productivity increases in some areas.
41. The Province of Farah is illustrative. Potential demand for improved seed can be quantified as existing among 35,000 farmers. Actual demand is considered to be in the order of 20 per cent, or 7,000 farmers who would be aware of the benefits of using new varieties of seed that has been cleaned, graded and treated. To date, half of the actual demand, or 10 per cent of potential demand (3,660 farmers), has been satisfied through the project. Despite this success over a two-year period, the creation of additional demand is seen as a long-term process. It is estimated that 4-5 years would be necessary to double the demand for improved seed and reach 50 per cent of potential demand.
42. Seed multiplication through the district *shura* mechanism has all the elements of being self-sustaining, as a privatized activity. Less progress has been made towards the goal of privatizing the operations of the 16 NGO Implementing Partners (or Seed

Production Units), which account for the bulk of the production and distribution of improved seed. FAO support for start-up production, EU provision of fertilizer and WFP "food for seed"<sup>2)</sup> are commercialized in the down-stream distribution of improved seed. This recovers and monetizes the original subsidies, at least in part, with the result that cash balances accumulate with the Implementing Partners. These balances are held in special accounts and, as of May 1999, amounted to US\$ 1.7 million equivalent.

43. The Seed Review Group, in which all interested stakeholders participate, is to make recommendations on the disposition of these balances. It is been agreed to use the funds for the purpose of building up a viable, commercially oriented seed industry in the country. Apart from allocating approximately US\$ 100,000 equivalent to establish a central seed facility in Herat<sup>3)</sup>, there is however as yet no clear plan as to how these moneys should be applied. The mid-term review recommendation that two seed production units should be fully privatized by the end of 1998 has yet to be implemented.
44. Project work in the field of horticulture, plant protection and varietal breeding is somewhat overshadowed by its achievements in seed production, but continue to be pursued with apparent good results. Extension activities and farmers' training draw on and benefit from work in the field of seed multiplication. The development of fruit and decorative tree nurseries, in particular, has been a notable success.

### **c) Rebuilding Communities in Urban Areas**

#### **Summary project description**

45. Approximately 15 per cent of the estimated 20 million population of Afghanistan are urban residents. The long years of armed conflict have destroyed almost all public and civic institutions and services in urban centres, including residential neighbourhoods. The rebuilding of urban areas in Afghanistan is an urgent priority to ensure minimum standards of quality of life of urban dwellers. Another important rationale is the link between serviceable urban neighbourhood as a pull factor for returning refugees.
46. The project, which is implemented by UNHCS (Habitat) has evolved substantially in its objectives, scope, logic, structure and philosophy from its predecessor project implemented in 1995-1997. The present project, which was incorporated in the PI programme, seeks to blend the earlier physical infrastructure rehabilitation objectives

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<sup>2)</sup> The production of contract growers multiplying foundation seed supplied on credit is purchased from the grower with food grain. In the case of wheat, 100 kg of improved seed is repaid with 125 kg of wheat supplied by WFP.

<sup>3)</sup> The Herat seed centre is operated by the Improved Seed Enterprise, a parastatal body, and consists of a seed testing laboratory, a large seed processing plant, stores and an administrative building.

with the building and strengthening of social, community, local governance and economic structures at grass-roots level. It is currently operational in 36 districts of 6 designated PI centres (Mazar, Kabul, Bamyan, Farah, Herat, Kandahar); 21 of these districts are among the 26 PI designated districts.

47. The immediate objectives of the project are to:

- ❑ improve the living conditions of urban residents, particularly the poorest and the most disadvantaged, through physical and social infrastructure repair and enlarged opportunities for local employment;
- ❑ enhance the capacity of municipal bodies to develop mechanisms for improving and repairing essential infrastructure;
- ❑ assist urban residents -- men and women – to organise themselves into viable decision-making bodies with capacity to address their development problems through a process of mutual consultation, shared knowledge and broad-based commitment.

48. The two key activities of the project consist of i) community organisation at the urban neighbourhood level as the key decision-making forum to address collective needs and establish priorities; and ii) provision of seed capital to establish community funds, to finance social services in primary education, basic health and to give micro-credit to poor families for community businesses.

49. The main project strategy is to act as a catalyst to channel seed capital to community structures; facilitate indigenous problem identification, prioritisation, implementation and capacity-building; and lastly to introduce low cost technologies by supporting repair and recovery initiatives at grass-roots and municipal levels.

50. The project has a life of 30 months, ending in December 1999, with a total budget of US\$ 7.8 million, of which US\$ 5.8 is from UNDP core funds. In addition, US\$ 2 million has been raised through parallel funding.

### **Mid-term review findings**

51. The 1998 technical review concluded that the project's objectives and strategies are largely consistent with PI principles and strategic objectives. It further commended the project for its results, its innovative approaches to community development, its positive contribution to the PI development agenda, and for the pragmatic and sensitive approach adopted by project towards authorities.

52. There has been action on some of the recommendations specific to programming and strategic planning. The project is working to finalise a plan based on Mazar experience to make an impact assessment of the possible scaling up Community Fora activities, under different scenarios integrating these initiatives with formal governance and administration structures. Another important recommendation that needs further thinking, planning and resource allocation is the staff training.

53. The project has substantially improved its reporting and monitoring systems and is working to integrate urban data and mapping with ProMIS. However, concerted and continuous efforts are required to complete this exercise. Most recommendations on sub-projects have been followed up.

### **Outcomes relevant to impact of PI objectives**

54. **Food security/nutrition:** Project activities in this area include the promotion of green belt urban agriculture that aims to increase food diversity, quality and quantity through crop experimentation and demonstration, as well as through family and community gardens. However, the primary contribution of project in this area is through support to employment related activities.

55. **Access to education:** There are two specific types of interventions supported by the project in the education sector. One is financial support to education services through community revolving funds. This provides for teacher salaries, textbooks and other materials, normally for home and community centre-based schools. The other is through sub-contracts with NGOs or private entities, and normally involves the rehabilitation of an educational building. Community fora in all 6 cities support literacy and education activities at both primary and secondary levels, as well as numeracy/literacy training. The demand for education of both girls and boys among parents and communities is high. Some specific tangible results in the education sector reported by the project:

- ❑ 75 female teachers and 125 male teachers are supported
- ❑ 2,300 girls and 3,150 boys attend either home-based or fora-based schools
- ❑ repair of 8 schools

56. To measure the change in access to education by girls and boys, from different socio-economic backgrounds in different cities, through project interventions, it is essential that some basic baseline indicators are collected to demonstrate that the project is currently working on outcome indicators that include coverage data.

57. **Access to health:** As with education, achievements in the health area are reported in i) building partnerships with other agencies concerned with health, both UN and NGOs, for a better delivery of health services; and ii) rehabilitation and rebuilding of damaged infrastructure, such as hospitals and basic health centres, through sub-contracts. Coverage data segregated by gender/age/disability/region and the specific services and their range is not yet available to determine the impact made by the project in health. Most health activities are run from the community centre, where a doctor regularly instructs people on health related problems and on environmental aspects, creating awareness and action by the community. The following results are reported by the project:

- ❑ 4 out of 6 city fora have partnerships with health agencies to improve the delivery of health services
- ❑ 2 hospitals have been repaired
- ❑ community is mobilised through fora for immunisation programmes, public health and nutrition education, targeting women in particular
- ❑ improved nutrition is regularly measured by number of families participating in family and community gardens, and in institutional feeding programmes.

58. **Access to drinking water and sanitation:** Some of the tangible outcome indicators are provided below. The project however needs to develop impact indicators as a matter of priority to measure its contribution to people's health status and hygiene behaviour. At the same time coverage data must be recorded, in order to assess cost-effectiveness as well as consistency and equity in level of services provided across the regions and socio-economic groups.

- ❑ 210 wells are dug and 253 hand-pumps are installed
- ❑ 17 submersible pumps, 1 generator, 1 transformer have been supplied
- ❑ drinking water is tested regularly for its quality, more than 100 samples (water and bottled drinks) have been tested
- ❑ 6 municipality trucks are repaired that are used for collection and dumping of city waste, 2 new dump trucks donated to municipality, 259,860 cu.m solid waste collected and disposed, 268 collection points and garbage bins established, and 23 soak-away pits constructed
- ❑ construction of 16 public latrines as part of sanitation improvement completed
- ❑ construction and repair of altogether 90 km of drainage ditches.

59. **Shelter and recycling:** The project is addressing the housing needs of urban residents through its shelter and re-cycling component. Old construction material is re-cycled, supplemented by subsidised new materials. Project has assisted in the reconstruction of 1,075 houses and in the production of 31,821 cu.m of sun dried bricks.

60. **Physical infrastructure:** This component is designed to improve irrigation and access through repair work as well as through new infrastructure. The following results are reported by the project:

- ❑ 14.7 km karez (irrigation systems) cleaned
- ❑ 5 km of canals cleared
- ❑ 37.08 km of access improvement
- ❑ 780 m of river embankment repaired and extended
- ❑ 6 municipal buildings are under rehabilitation.

61. **Access to sustainable livelihoods:** Three major interventions are supported by project in this area. One relates to social service providers (in dispensaries and clinics, literacy courses, library, kindergartens, etc.), and is financed from community funds. The second involves the creation of community businesses, again financed by

community fund. The third concerns income-generation opportunities at family level, initially with credit provided from community revolving funds. Project support is limited to a one-shot provision of seed capital to develop the core forum system. Seed capital is provided to the community fund for purchase of equipment and services, and for the establishment of a revolving fund. The fund is used to provide credit for labour and materials. Innovative approaches are employed to strengthen the ability of communities to maximise business profits in an unstable market, through diversity of equity investments, lending, and ownership of funds by maturing fora. Specific output indicators in this area include:

- ❑ sustainable livelihoods (in management, administration, accounting, crafts, business, commerce), benefiting 500 men and 300 women
- ❑ 150 men and women supported through provision of social services and operation and maintenance of physical infrastructure
- ❑ vocational training provided in over 70 per cent of the enterprises selected either for community businesses or for individual income-generating activity
- ❑ 3,000 women employed in production of relief materials (quilts, sweaters)
- ❑ 12 Neighbourhood Investment Funds established for mature forums for investment in commercial activities, services, and infrastructure
- ❑ 550 kitchen gardens and 37 demonstration plots established (both for community & households).

62. **Environment:** The project is succeeding to create community awareness for the need to protect the natural environment and for a healthy life-style. It has supported the establishment of 7 public parks and nurseries, the distribution of seedlings and planting of 250,000 trees.

63. **Recreation:** Youth is mobilised and organised to become responsible citizens. These groups are implementing and monitoring Agenda-21 in their neighbourhoods. Responding to youth needs, the project has assisted in the formation of 20 football and volleyball teams.

64. **Gender components:** One of the key objectives of the project is to mainstream gender in all its activities. To this end, it has achieved substantial results. Through the community fora (6 women only and 15 mixed of in all 37 fora), women are given the opportunity to become active partners in local planning, decision-making, resource allocation, and implementation of development work. Women make up the management teams, as paid workers of women-exclusive fora and trained under the project in the management of these fora. A scaling-up strategy for women's involvement in all districts is a matter of priority. The Mazar experience needs to be visited to assess the strategies used by women to continue their community and public role over the last year, under the changed political regime. More creative and innovative approaches to continue its gender mainstreaming work are needed in the south and central regions. The project has also developed a strategy for raising public consciousness regarding the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

65. **Community participation and ownership:** Community participation and ownership is central to the project's operational strategies, with the mobilisation of communities in self-managed and self-sustaining community fora. There are a total of 37 community fora (CFs), 6 women, 16 men and 15 mixed. Mixed fora have been established only in Mazar and central Hazarajat. CF formation in the south and central regions has been slow, in particular the establishment of women's fora.

- ❑ The indicator used for measuring community participation is the attendance at the three-weekly meetings held in community centres. The project is compiling data in this respect. Another indicator used is the number and type of independent contacts that fora make with non-Habitat supported projects or aid agencies, to develop partnerships. Complete data on this indicator is also currently being collected.
- ❑ Fora provide a venue for women and men to address common issues affecting their neighbourhood. Problems range from need for social services, infrastructure and entrepreneurship through credit and vocational training.
- ❑ The fora are linked with municipal and higher levels of administration structures, as well as to other aid agencies through the Community Forums Development Organization (CFDO) of the city. The six CFDOs is at the apex of the community structure, with *shura* (37 total) as consultative bodies in the middle, and CFs at the bottom of the structure. CFDOs work as a city-wide support and resource body, and is the critical interface between CFs and other development partners.
- ❑ CFDOs foster partnerships to promote inter-forum trade, exchange and credit to gain economies of scale, to capitalise on comparative advantage, and to optimise vertical and horizontal integration. It further develops rural-urban linkages with other rural and urban CFs, in the form of goods, services, and agro-businesses.
- ❑ The project has developed methods of communication within and between fora in city neighbourhoods, through notice and bulletin boards, newsletters and meetings, exchange information and experiences as well as to develop a single identity among all levels of the structure.

### Overall assessment

66. Based on the output indicators provided and direct observations of project activities in field, especially in Herat and Kabul, the project is making good progress towards its primary objectives of building grassroots level governance structures and support for an indigenous process of repair and recovery in urban areas. To further strengthen its work the project needs to address:

- ❑ the issue of baseline, outcome and impact indicators as well as coverage data for social services and micro-credit
- ❑ the need to further strengthen the links between the municipal works component with community-based work, so that better ownership and shared responsibility is established among all stakeholders

- ❑ initiate and strengthen regional level cross-sectoral planning with other PI stakeholders and non-PI agencies working in the focus areas of interventions, to create and strengthen synergies
- ❑ improve rural-urban linkages, especially through ARRP and FAO-Crops projects, e.g. marketing channels for agri and non-agri products
- ❑ translate the agreement between the project and authorities in the south in an action plan, with appropriate strategies for integrating women in a manner similar to Mazar experience.

#### **d) Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Programme<sup>4</sup>(CDAP)**

##### **Summary programme description**

67. Some 4 per cent of Afghans suffer from physical and mental disabilities, directly or indirectly connected with 20 years of civil war. Taken together, families affected by disability account for up to 10 per cent of the population. Physical disability poses serious economic and social constraints in a labour-intensive, unmechanised economy, and significantly reduces income options. The disabled are thus arguably among Afghanistan's poorest, most vulnerable groups.
68. Since 1995 CDAP has worked through national and international implementing partners to create an integrated system of community organisations, community-based rehabilitation workers/volunteer, employment/educational support and disability services. In addition, CDAP programming contains prominent thematic strategies, including:
- ❑ **Community-based rehabilitation (CBR):** This is meant to transfer responsibility and ownership of disability issues to local communities. CDAP supports the formation of volunteer CBR committees (CBRCs), made up of prominent community members, in order to promote disability issues locally, and advocate on behalf of the disabled.
  - ❑ **Training:** Staff training/upgrading on disability and related issues is emphasized at all programme levels, through regular workshops and course. Mid-level staff receive training covering 7 disability categories at six regional training centres. Beneficiary training is delivered in homes and vocational workshops.
  - ❑ **Organisational capacity building:** National implementing partners receive sustained organisational support in the form of management workshops, monitoring/evaluation tools and seed grants staff development. This is meant to consolidate local capacities to address disability in the longer term.

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<sup>4</sup> ) CDAP activities are not limited to PI districts. CDAP data and reporting, though excellent, is not disaggregated for PI programme implementation. Quantitative data reported here thus provide a national perspective on actions and outcomes. This is supplemented by insights gained during the Mission's site visits in the PI areas.

- **Vulnerable groups:** Under the PI, CDAP has extended its coverage to include vulnerable women and children not otherwise identified under disability categories.

69. These orientations are framed by CDAP's many cross-cutting, multi-level programme objectives, which together aim at comprehensively addressing the socio-economic and special needs of disabled Afghans.

### **Mid-term review findings**

70. The mid-term review indicated that CDAP actions were consistent with PI principles and programme strategies, including their focus on vulnerable groups, emphasis on community capacity-building over project delivery, and their relation to peace-building through support for *shura* and CBR committees. In all, 107 recommendations were issued for CDAP, implementing partners, the PI and UN agencies. CDAP has responded to 15 key points, four of which are directly relevant to overall PI objectives:

- “Increase the recruitment of women at all levels”. Actions taken include: a) successful negotiation with authorities for the employment of female staff in Farah and Kandahar; b) an increase in female staffing from 17 to 22 per cent; c) the recruitment of 83 female community volunteers; d) a commitment to raise the number of women MLRWs. These measures raise women's access to CDAP services. However, new recruits are concentrated in the lower staff positions. More complete training coverage for women staff would further consolidate gains in recruitment.
- “Increase frequency of Advisory Council meetings to facilitate [...] strategic planning with respect to P.E.A.C.E”. Although stronger planning is needed among PI partners, CDAP reports that no action has been taken in this respect.
- “Increase linkages of disability programme with other sectors”. CDAP reports that this is ongoing at district level. However, the Mission has observed this process to be uneven across the regions visited.
- “Increase linkages with the health sector”. CDAP reports full involvement in National Immunization Days. Health issues related to disability are covered by the programme officer for Monitoring and Evaluation, who is a medical doctor. Budgetary constraints preclude the recruitment of an additional Health Officer. Stronger health linkages through CDAP would help extend PI activities into a vital development sector and strengthen PI impacts for women.

## Outcomes relevant to impact of PI objectives

71. **Food Security:** CDAP support in this area relates primarily to employment support activities, which covered 3,268 beneficiaries in 1997-8 (58 per cent women). In Farah, employment support for 38 widows is directly related to food production (chick hatcheries).
72. **Access to disability services:** Access to disability care and training is expanded both through home-based services and 36 CDAP supported physiotherapy centres. Home-based support is provided by 75 physiotherapists and assistants (of which 33 women), with timetables for household visits in both rural and urban areas. Additional support, including referrals, is provided by MLRWs. In general, access by women is weakened by mobility constraints, both on patients and workers. Access to orthopedic services from most rural areas is difficult, as there are few workshops.
- ❑ Over 34,000 disabled persons (approximately 35 per cent women) received services in 1997-8, of which some 20 per cent were home based
  - ❑ Over 6,200 orthopedic appliances were supplied or repaired in 1997-8, with about one third provided to women.
73. **Access to education:** Improving access to educational opportunities is integral to CDAP's objective of social integration. CDAP's education activities take two forms: a) the integration of disabled children into mainstream schools, by direct engagement with education agencies or through intervention by prominent CBRC members; b) the provision of special education, including home-based training, in Braille, sign language, lip reading and learning for the mentally disabled. Special education was supported in 1997-8 by the training of 96 female and 187 male teachers. Beneficiary access to education for 1997-8 is reported as follows:
- ❑ 980 boys and 216 girls integrated into mainstream schools and madrassas
  - ❑ 419 boys and 249 girls received home based special education.
74. Education access for girls has improved at an uneven pace across the regions. In particular, girl's inclusion has been consistently low in Kandahar, and higher in Herat and Mazar. The programme would benefit by addressing regional discrepancies as a matter of priority.
75. **Improved access to sustainable livelihoods:** In each district, CDAP deploys an employment-support officer who, in collaboration with MLRWs and CBRCs, identifies beneficiaries for job-placement, vocational training and small credit schemes. Individual credits range between \$100-\$200, with a pay-back period of 22 months. Among the beneficiaries interviewed, a majority reported having had no prior economic activity. Others reported that prior business activities, such as small shop-keeping, had now become economically viable. All credit recipients were confident about returning their loans, although data indicates that overdue repayments exceed those completed on time.

76. In the PI districts, CDAP also targets vulnerable women and children for vocational training, and credit support, though the process has been uneven. In Keshem district, programme staff were not aware that these categories had been identified for support. CDAP employment support during the 1997-8 period was as follows:

- ❑ 844 men and 487 women have received credit for income generation activities
- ❑ 295 men and 361 have been placed in group vocational training or individual traineeships (1998)
- ❑ 410 vulnerable women and children have received income generation support (1998).

77. **Gender differentiation:** A significant proportion of CDAP beneficiaries are women, and the programme has increased the number of female staff and volunteer workers, further raising access to services. The extension of programme coverage to include vulnerable women and children in PI areas is a positive move. Gains would be consolidated by concrete steps to increase girls education. A comprehensive gender strategy, which mainstreams the special needs of women staff and beneficiaries, and accounts for the effects of CDAP interventions on domestic and economic life, would further strengthen the programme.

78. **Community empowerment:** Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) heavily relies on successful local empowerment. Key CBR strategies include raising disability awareness, mobilising and capacitating communities to address needs of disabled members, and advocacy in support of access to available services and benefits. Key CBR actors include: a) CBRCs, composed of educated, often influential community residents interested in disability; b) disabled persons organisations (DPOs), providing a framework for mutual support and self-help; c) community volunteers dedicating 2-12 hours per week on work with the disabled; and d) CDAP implementing partner staff, recruited from within the communities, which work closely with the community groups. The growth of community organisations between 1997 and 1999 is reported as follows:

- ❑ the number of women's CBRCs grew from 16 to 51, mainly in the Northern and Central regions. To date, none have been formed in the Kandahar or Herat regions
- ❑ the number of men's CBRCs grew from 253 to 354 during the period
- ❑ one new women's DPO was created, for a total of 15
- ❑ the number of men's DPOs nearly doubled, from 77 to 143.

79. In order to strengthen programme coherence in the PI districts, CDAP has worked with ARR- supported local *shuras*. However, given the general-interest character of the *shuras*, there is some question as to whether they can substitute for CBRCs in addressing the specific needs of the disabled.

## Overall assessment

80. CDAP operates a strong, gender-disaggregated data gathering and reporting system, recently improved by the distribution of a "tool kit" among all staff. Given this solid information base, a more robust impact analysis, particularly on women, is possible. Separate reporting for the focus districts would support integrated assessments of overall PI performance.
81. The Mission was able to meet with a number of beneficiaries in the Kabul, Badakshan and Farah areas. Overall, education, vocational and income-generation activities appeared to be opening opportunities for beneficiaries where none had existed before. Beneficiaries conveyed a strong sense of socio-economic improvement and self-reliance. Appropriate strategies to better distribute such benefits among women should be considered.
82. Knowledge of marketing and business management, particularly among women beneficiaries, is weak. Options to ensure better training and follow-up of women's income-related activities should be identified.
83. Access to services from rural areas is problematic. Mobility constraints resulting from "cultural factors" particularly affect women's access and staff outreach. Dedicated measures, including logistical coordination with other PI partners, should be considered to support women's mobility.
84. In the PI districts where CBRCs have not been established, CDAP should seek more actively to ensure stronger representation of disabled persons on ARRP-supported village and district *shuras*.
85. There appears to be an inherent incompatibility between CDAP's community-based development approach and its reliance on NGO implementing partners in the field. Arguably, the implementing partners represent additional organisational layers, which may weaken direct links with communities/beneficiaries and complicate programme and staff management. Options for enhancing the direct role of community groups in implementation, and for strengthening programmatic interaction between local and central levels should be considered.

#### **e) Livestock Development for Food Security**

##### **Summary project description**

86. The livestock sector is of vital importance to the economy of Afghanistan and to the 85 per cent of the country's population that is engaged in agriculture. As a result of the war, the livestock population was seriously decimated in the 1980's. Existing official livestock support and animal health services broke down almost completely, and herds were ravaged by uncontrolled diseases.

87. The project is the most recent in a succession of project phases devoted to animal health and livestock production, carried out by FAO and other organizations and building on their achievements. It is active not only in the designated PI districts but across the country, at regional, district and village levels, establishing veterinary field units in 255 districts. Its immediate objectives are
- ❑ to augment the capacity of livestock owners to engage in financially viable animal husbandry and production activities,
  - ❑ and to provide an improved, self-reliant and cost-effective veterinary service to keepers of cattle, sheep and goats, poultry, horses, donkeys and camels.
88. A key activity consists of the organization of veterinary field units (VFU) staffed by at least one qualified veterinarian, a para-vet and auxiliary vet personnel. Technical and material support in their establishment is provided through 15 national and international NGOs. VFUs are to operate as far as possible on a self-sustaining basis, recovering costs for vaccines and drugs from farmers. The ultimate aim is to enable VFUs to function as privatized entities, with sufficient business and resources to replace equipment assets and to cover running costs. To the extent that VFUs are engaged in disease surveillance and other survey activities, as well as in farmer training programmes, their operations are subsidized under the project.
89. Another important activity is the combined training and extension method known as PIHAM (a set of animal health and production improvement training modules). This constitutes the project's key strategy for engaging farmer groups and individual farmer families as active partners in planning and implementing project activities and for involving communities directly. Other capacity-raising activities include refresher training of vets and para-vets, as well as basic vet workers, some of them women.
90. The project is financed over a 30-month period from UNDP core funds to the tune of US\$ 5.55 million, to which should be added co-financing contributions from multilateral and bilateral donors in the amount of US\$ 2.6 million.

### **Mid-term review findings**

91. The technical review of the project in 1998 endorsed the general approach adopted by the project and concluded that it continued to deliver an effective animal health service nation-wide. Its methods and practices were judged to be consistent with PI objectives. The review further held that the project's participatory and sustainability strategies were sound, and that it was making deliberate efforts to understand and meet the needs of women.
92. The review praised the project's thorough system of reporting and monitoring animal health and production conditions, drawing on data generated by PIHAM and by VFUs. In this context, it was recommended that the system be used to greater advantage for trend analysis and for use in the selection of impact indicators, as for instance disease prevalence in different regions.

93. Specifically, the review recommended that at least 10 VFUs should be fully privatized by September 1998 and carefully monitored until the end of the project; that continued efforts be made to improve drug supply through the Veterinary Service Associations, including longer term arrangements for securing a reliable supply of vaccines; that pressures on the part of NGOs against cost recovery be resisted; that the effectiveness of PIHAM be verified so as to reach a larger number of farmers; and that priority be given to measures which directly benefit the poorest sections of the community.
94. Most recommendations have been acted upon, at least in part. The privatization of VFUs has however been a slower process than anticipated, primarily as a result of lacking management capacity but also because of resource constraints, in particular for the provision of transportation equipment. No privatized VFUs have been established in PI focus areas, and the target of 10 privatized VFUs has been set back by a year.

### **Outcomes relevant to impact of PI objectives**

95. **Food security:** Bearing in mind the importance of livestock products in the matter of food security, and that these products in turn depend on the health and vitality of livestock herds, the following indicators are relevant:
- ❑ Total vaccinations, deworming, and other treatments during 1997-98 totaled over 25 million. (Although a large number of multiple and repeat treatments are involved, this figure should be related to the existence of about 30 million livestock, poultry included, as estimated by FAO-led surveys in 1995). About 10 per cent of these vaccinations and treatments were effected in PI focus areas. Supplies of vaccines and medicines through the Veterinary Service Associations increased ten-fold in 1998, reaching a turnover valued at US\$ 665,000 for the 2-year period.
  - ❑ Consolidation of the establishment, staffing and operations of 255 district VSUs nation-wide. Refresher training of 865 vets and para-vets at the Kabul Veterinary Training Centre. 212 new basic vet workers were trained and refresher training was provided to 375 basic vet workers
  - ❑ The establishment of 2 dairy cooperatives in Kandahar and Kabul to link milk producers in peri-urban areas with the city market, at the current rate of 3,000 litres of milk daily.
96. **Access to education:** While hardly measurable in relation to actual demand, capacity-building reaching down to farmer levels may be assessed on the basis of the following indicators:
- ❑ Practical and technical training was provided for some 3,800 farmers in selected villages, through the PIHAM training and extension programmes. Over half of the persons trained were in PI focus areas.

- ❑ 534 men trained in semi-commercial poultry production techniques. Backyard poultry training to 526 village women
- ❑ Needs assessment cum extension training carried out among 2,550 village women by the project's 12 female Livestock Initiators
- ❑ Surveys carried out among 4,600 nomadic livestock farmers.

97. **Access to livelihood opportunities:** Efforts to stimulate income-earning opportunities related to livestock include wool spinning and carpet weaving, milk collection, support to household and larger scale poultry producers, animal breeders, molasses block production, and fish pond culture. Some of the indicators are:

- ❑ 49 men and 260 women trained in wool spinning and carpet weaving
- ❑ Milk collection from 90 farmers, producing up to 20 tons/month
- ❑ 26 inseminators trained in 8 centres and providing 354 artificial inseminations since the inception of the programme
- ❑ 35 fish ponds dug and stocked with carp fingerlings
- ❑ 700 tons of molasses urea blocks distributed in 12 provinces for use in on-farm demonstrations of concentrates; 200 tons used in PI focus districts

98. **Gender differentiation:** Despite efforts at different levels, there are many obstacles on the way to reaching women farmers. New practical approaches are being tried with good results through the work of the 12 female trainers and "livestock initiators". Some relevant indicators are:

- ❑ Contact and extension training reaching down to 2,550 village women
- ❑ Backyard poultry training provided to 526 village women
- ❑ 34 female basic veterinary workers integrated in the VFUs.

99. **Community empowerment:** Community empowerment in the project takes the form of technical support to the formation of common interest groups, such as farmer groups (established through PIHAM), initial capitalization and support to milk collection cooperatives and poultry farmers associations. The project also provides technical advice to borrowers from village and district *shura* micro-credit schemes. Some relevant indicators are:

- ❑ 7 fully functional, privatized VFUs at the district level
- ❑ 99 PIHAM farmer groups established at village level
- ❑ 107 village women groups
- ❑ 4 poultry farmers associations, with in all 150 member producers
- ❑ 2 milk collection and processing cooperatives in Kabul and Kandahar.

## Overall assessment

100. The livestock programme has achieved widespread coverage in terms of animal health protection and veterinary services and managed to maintain, through refresher courses, a cadre of qualified veterinarians and auxiliary personnel. This constitutes a lasting contribution to national capacity in an area vitally important to food security. In the view of the Mission, this coverage may be over-ambitious and accompanied by a loss of quality in the services provided. This has become apparent with the cessation of support funding to a large number of VFUs, via implementing partners, at the end of 1998. As a result, many VFUs are in a state of enforced privatization, without being ready to stand on their own feet.
101. The introduction of the PIHAM system of modular training and extension linking the various project components and reaching down to village farmers, including women, appears promising but is of too recent date to show significant penetration and impact. While a valuable source of basic data, PIHAM is somewhat slow-moving, and the Mission believes that the recommendation of the mid-term review to expedite programme phasing should be acted upon.
102. It is recognized that more time than offered by the current project duration is necessary to achieve impact in terms of livestock production work. The Mission endorses the project's general approach to encouraging the formation of common interest groups at various levels. More attention should be paid to exit strategies in the case of poultry farmers cooperatives, based on the project's general philosophy of cost recovery and user fees. While attempting to achieve national coverage, the project's specific impact in PI focus areas is not appreciably greater than elsewhere.
103. The privatization of VFUs has been slower than expected and is confined to the eastern parts of the country, in the more prosperous livestock areas. The Mission believes that the slow pace of privatization is attributable to management deficiencies and inability to establish regular supply lines of vaccines and drugs, rather than the lack of initial capitalization. This raises a general question as to whether privatization is at this stage an effective approach except in the most prosperous areas.

#### IV. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES: OBJECTIVES, CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

##### **Relevance of PI Objectives**

1. The PI programme document incorporates the three principal objectives of peace-building, poverty alleviation, and community empowerment. These reflect the basic common programming themes, and are consistent with the objectives of the Strategic Framework. Although PI objectives are intimately linked, for the purposes of clarity, their respective relevance to the Afghan context is discussed individually.
2. **Poverty alleviation:** The contextual relevance of this objective is obvious. After twenty years of war instability and human displacement, Afghanistan currently ranks among the lowest countries on the UNDP Human Development Index. Widespread poverty, linked with dramatic declines in production, trade, transport and services, has a direct bearing on life expectancy, food security and nutritional status, public health and the observance of human and social rights. The burdens of poverty and its wider consequences disproportionately affect groups like the landless, the disabled, women and children, whose coping options are generally more restricted.
3. PI programmes have addressed the issue of poverty in different ways. Strategies have variably been based on support for revolving funds, infrastructure and mechanical inputs in the productive sectors, credit provision and vocational training. As part of these strategies, most PI partners place considerable emphasis on restoring the associational fabric of local society. Two key issues arise from PI programming in poverty alleviation:
  4. First, to the degree that poverty alleviation is a matter of *wealth creation*, patterns of distribution must be of primary concern. Undue concentrations of wealth resulting from project inputs may generate new barriers against broader PI anti-poverty objectives. For both technical and methodological reasons, some PI partners appear to have had more success than others in ensuring wealth creating opportunities for the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The fundamental governance issue of "**who gets what, where, when, and how?**" must closely accompany poverty alleviation programming. Enhanced monitoring, analysis, and feedback in this respect is necessary.
  5. Second, the causes of poverty lie in a complex of structural factors linked to productive activity. Poor health, low levels of education and constraints on mobility (particularly for women) weaken human capital and thus limit opportunities to alleviate poverty. PI actions have addressed these issues on various fronts, though not in a strategic manner. In particular, PI activities have tended to concentrate on infrastructure and production, with less

emphasis in the social sectors. A balanced, strategic, approach should enable the PI programming to address poverty issues more comprehensively.

6. **Community empowerment:** It is agreed that the empowerment of communities remains a salient objective in Afghanistan, both because of the corrosive effects of poverty and warfare on local social systems, and because of the virtual non-existence of formal structures. In all, over 2100 separate community organisations, farmers groups and interest associations have been (re) activated with the support of the PI programme. Of these, 173 (or about 8 percent) have been formed by women. Another 15 “mixed” organisations have been formed with assistance from Habitat. In all cases, community organisations are more or less directly linked to project activities.
7. PI partners adopt different methods for community engagement. Each is informed by past experiences, and is relevant to the immediate needs, aims and programming environment of the respective component programmes. ARRP’s community engagement is the most expanded, comprising over half of the community organizations formed. ARRP *shura* cover just under 900 communities in a system of pyramid representation that reaches up from villages to district committees which convene regularly to discuss community needs and proposals. They build on the existing tradition of village committee formation, although *shuras* have mainly been devoted to adjudicating disputes. The process is supported by a gradual introduction of material and infrastructure support on the part of the programme.
8. Habitat’s Community Fora, also led by *shura* “boards” but concentrated mainly in urban centres, are far less numerous. However, they incorporate mechanisms for direct community consultation and a capacity for managing funds in support of local services such as schools and clinics. The Fora system has been particularly successful in maintaining a high proportion of women’s participation (45 per cent of Fora in Kabul neighbourhoods are composed of women). In all cases, the community groups are supported by an initial start-up investment of \$9,900 provided by Habitat.
9. CDAP has sponsored the formation of some 500 men’s and 66 women’s voluntary groups to advocate and mobilize communities in support of the disabled. These groups regularly liaise with CDAP professional staff, local institutions and other agencies, in order to secure services and promote the integration of beneficiaries into mainstream social life (primarily through employment and education).
10. For its part, the FAO livestock programme has interacted directly with farmers through its 99 PIHAM training groups, and supported over 100 village groups for women with income generation schemes. It also supports the establishment of common interest groupings for poultry, dairy and bee-keeping activities.

11. To the extent that these various methods of community empowerment do not confront or contradict one another, the Mission finds that uniformity of methods need not be pursued, as this might raise new uncertainties and lower existing cohesion. Rather, the different methods should seek to reinforce learning and feedback mechanisms internally, and provide the basis meaningful cross-fertilization.
12. Having met with several local organizations at various stages of development, the Mission feels that local “ownership” of the development process has grown as the organisations themselves have learned in and matured: Whereas recently-started groups in the Kabul and Faizabad areas displayed a strong shopping-list approach to projects, better established ones in Farah appeared more ready to take a lead in planning and managing project activities.
13. Community level interventions contain some measure of risk. It needs to be explicitly recognized that "empowerment" implies "building power" by working with existing local social forms. Any assumption that local groups are entirely new, or built in a vacuum would be misleading. A better understanding of how PI empowerment methods interact with local realities, including multiple actors, levels of authority and systems of representation, is essential.
14. **Peace-building:** This objective is of obvious relevance to the war-torn context, and speaks directly both to the Strategic Framework objectives and the guidelines for common programming. The Mission encountered some evidence of the peace-building effects of PI programming. As mentioned in paragraph Chapter V, para 39, district *shuras*, through their influence, have been instrumental in resolving some threatening disputes between commanders and deflected Taliban recruitment drives. These and other reported instances of conflict resolution are encouraging.
15. Actively gearing projects to reduce the risks of conflict, including new forms of tension, would be consistent with PI objectives in poverty alleviation and community development. In this respect, PI activities in some of the heavily war-affected urban and peri-urban districts of Kabul represent a positive, if somewhat piecemeal, step. More targeting of conflict affected areas, as well as conflict-vulnerable groups (returnees, ex-combatants, male youth) would add further peace-building value to PI activities.
16. Despite some positive effects observed in the field, peace-building concepts and strategies have yet to be fully incorporated into PI programming. In highly politicized environments, effective risk reduction would involve building capacity for conflict risk analysis at all programme levels. Systematically monitoring programme activities for their relevance and sensitivity to volatile local environments, and for their effects on the exposure of beneficiaries to violence, is essential to peace-building in Afghan context.

17. Conflict risk analysis raises new questions and challenges for development programming. While poverty alleviation, community empowerment and peace-building are described in the programme document as closely linked processes, the connections between them are not automatic, and may in fact be negative. For example, a structural factor of warfare in Afghanistan has been the chronic fragmentation of power and resistance to central authority. If community *shura*, as in Kandahar, empowered by programme activities, increase their resistance to structured authority, this may reinforce the longer term logic of war rather than peace. In another case, the Mission found that community *shura* supported by the programme in Azro and Tesin districts belonged to tribal groups allied to recently warring factional commanders. How would they fit into a long-term vision of peace consolidation in Afghanistan?
18. The point is that effective peace-building is not simply incidental to other development objectives. To be effective, peace-building strategies, such as conflict analysis, must help to shape policies and choices in other developmental realms.

### **Impact indicators and evaluation**

19. Assessments of overall programme impact are difficult to deliver, partly due to the complexity of sectoral and social activities involved. At the same time, the Mission notes that over 100 impact indicators are contained in the PI programme document. Even if they could be operationalised, such a volume of indicators is counter-productive. Where they are used, the process is inconsistent from one regional office to the next. Mostly, available data refer to outputs. It is recognized that baseline information was lacking from the outset. At the same time, little apparent effort was made to conduct joint PI technical surveys in the focus areas, as anticipated in the original programme document. At the very least, this would have facilitated some type of “before/after” analysis of impacts.
20. During visits to the field, the Mission sought to the extent possible to gauge the way in which such activities as credit provision, canal construction, sanitation, or agricultural support have impacted upon the lives and future prospects of beneficiaries. While responses were forthcoming, actual impact estimates were approximative. In at least two instances, it was explained that impact monitoring had only recently been initiated. That is, towards the very end of the current programme cycle. Knowledge is particularly vague in the case of gender and social development, where internal community and family relations remain unclear.
21. This situation seriously compromises the ability of programme managers to monitor progress towards PI programme objectives. This has implications for

funding, and for wider public transparency. More importantly, it precludes any systematic knowledge of the effectiveness of concepts and strategies employed. The resulting lack of learning severely weakens the overall quality of programming.

22. The shift from outputs to impact-oriented assessment requires urgent, programme-wide identification and activation of selective but meaningful indicators. More importantly, it will require a genuine commitment (human and material) on the part of PI partners and UNDP to a more results-oriented, rather than an “assumptions-based”, programming style.

### **Coverage and area focus**

23. The history of area selection under the PI programme has been complicated by recurring war-related disruptions and the appearance of new opportunities. The programme’s original focus on 23 districts was affected first by political events in the Mazar area in 1997 where the PI activities of some partners had only just begun. A subsequent decision to open new focus districts in Bamyan province, motivated by a broader aid response to food crisis in the area, was equally cut short by events 1998, as were activities in the adjacent, originally selected districts of Wardak. In tandem with this, the PI programme was partially expanded to two districts under the Azro/Tezin initiative in 1998, led by UNCHR under outside donor funding. This decision was justified in terms of meeting the resettlement needs of expected returnees.
24. At the time of writing, some PI partners continue their support for activities in the Mazar and Bamyan areas, through local staff or community groups, and at reduced levels. By contrast, ARRP has shifted the weight of its efforts to the 10 PI districts of the Southern region. The Wardak districts remain effectively closed due to continued insecurity.
25. The above strongly suggests that area selection under the PI programme has been events-based and funds-driven. Indeed, the PI programme document contains little in the way of selection criteria, although some reference to political and ethnic balance is made. The Mission notes that specific selection criteria were introduced only towards the end of 1997, some months after the beginning programme, and in the wake of events in Mazar. Many of these do not appear to have reflected consistently on subsequent decisions concerning Bamyan, Azro/Tesin or the Southern districts.
26. From a programming standpoint, the issue of coverage continues to center on tension between technical benefits of extended coverage and requirements for “high-impact interventions” and concentrated synergy envisaged in the PI programme document. This poses a special problem for PI partners with broader national commitments, or whose technical requirements for “high

impact” do not correspond with the demographic or economic profiles of selected focus areas. Lack of consultation and joint-planning on this issue has led partners increasingly to take unilateral decisions on resource allocation.

27. Though future coverage remains an outstanding issue to be decided jointly, the Mission finds that the current PI areas should be maintained in order to consolidate gains made, and to further accompany local processes, set in motion by community-based activities, towards longer-term sustainability.

### **Coordination and synergies**

28. The PI programme document states that "UNDP will play a leadership role in facilitating the coordinated planning and implementation of high impact interventions". The Mission has found that programme synergies are, in practice, stronger in the field, particularly in focus areas not subject to security-related interruptions, and where other aid actors are absent. In these areas, synergies appear to be both needs-based and programme-inspired and, notably, have developed despite the prolonged absence of international staff.
29. Likewise in these areas, common programme identity among staff is strong, and clearly projected outwards to beneficiaries and local authorities. According to Farah regional and district officers, the use of a common office space, and participation in monthly coordination meetings among the district managers, are positive reinforcing factors. However, coordinated use of transport facilities and office equipment could be further improved.
30. In Kabul, by contrast, internal synergies and programme identity have been slower to develop. Noted reasons for this may include: a) PI partners' prior operational history; b) the use of separate premises; c) separate links with communities and authorities; and d) the presence of other aid actors.
31. The position of "team leader", observed in the Farah and Badakshan districts appears to strengthen cohesion and leadership among the PI staff, and could be considered for replication in all the focus areas. Consideration might also be given to regularly rotating this position among PI partner agencies.
32. Examples of field-level synergies with actors outside of the PI programme are abundant. In the areas visited, the Mission observed mutually beneficial inter-agency activities, particularly through WFP food-for-work, UNICEF vaccination and schooling programmes, and WHO health education programmes. Discussions are currently underway between FAO and UNICEF to share a number of human health and veterinary facilities.
33. Substantial parallel support from at least 10 bilateral funding agencies, amounting to nearly half of the PI programme budget, has reinforced specific

activities in animal health, crop production, and urban infrastructure, as well as training and community development.

34. Most encouragingly, synergies have become increasingly apparent at the community level. As noted in Chapter III, contacts between local *shura* in the 10 Southern districts and outside actors are reported in the hundreds. Although this is primarily a result of contracting arrangements linked to the programme, it nonetheless reinforces relations among local actors on the ground. In Farah center, the Mission observed the community forum to be independently involved in separate activities with UNICEF, the Department of Public Health and DAKKAR (NGO). In Kabul and Kandahar, dairy cooperatives supported by the FAO livestock programme have very successfully begun to link rural producers with urban markets.
35. At the central planning level, coordination appears to be constrained by a number of factors, including:
  - ❑ broader commitments of some agencies outside the PI framework
  - ❑ disagreements related to core funding asymmetries
  - ❑ perceptions of mandate
  - ❑ lack of information sharing
  - ❑ irregularity of planning meetings
  - ❑ lack of proactive facilitation by UNDP management staff.

### **Security factors**

36. As with other UN programmes, security restrictions have severely limited access to the focus areas by international staff. This situation is further compounded by additional restrictions on citizenship, which directly affects 3 of the 5 Programme Managers. The restrictions have adversely affected programme coherence and significantly reduced management cost-efficiency.
37. Among the areas visited, insecurity was observed to directly affect programme operations in the Badakshan districts, where land access is difficult due to the political situation. More generally, there is a notable inconsistency between the scope of UN security measures taken and actual risk. However, it is unlikely that the situation will change without significant shifts in the political situation in Afghanistan. Under these circumstances, temporary management options, such as transfers of authority to regional offices, extended visits by senior national programme staff, and shared offices, might be considered as means to strengthen management and reduce duplication costs.

## Gender differentiation

38. PI Gender mainstreaming must be assessed at programme and individual project levels, and focus on specific tools and practices for planning, programming and monitoring. At programme level, issues of personnel, principles, funding, resource allocation, geographical coverage and decision-making are all equally salient to a gender assessment. At project level, key issues of gender mainstreaming include: staffing choices, HRD strategy and planning; partnerships criteria; relations with authorities and operational styles. Methodologies for community participation, credit, capacity-building, as well as surveying, monitoring and reporting processes are vital to assessing gender impact.
39. Gender mainstreaming is a development issue that requires process-oriented incremental approaches, which results in more qualitative changes and impacts that are not easy to quantify. This makes the evaluation of gender-specific impact, in any tangible sense, a rather difficult task. Under the PI, this task is further challenged by the absence of good gender-specific baseline and impact indicators.
40. A number of projects show very strong and encouraging grass-roots elements of gender equity. These are oriented more toward a broader women's development methodology than a gender mainstreaming framework. Most relate to women's practical needs such as food, health care, water, latrines, winter clothing, and indicators suggest improvements in the material wellbeing of women.
41. There are far fewer examples that address the structural inequalities and strategic need concerns of women, particularly the issue of a-symmetrical power relations between genders. Such cases include programme activities that ensure women's participation in community structures, decisions-making, priority and resources allocation and organisational capacity-building. Where such cases arise, impact indicators are required to show how interventions are enhancing women's bargaining power, their choices in life, changes in their worldview, and shifts in broader social attitudes and practices.
42. At the staffing level, the Mission has noted concrete efforts made by projects to hire more female staff for management and implementation. Reaching out to women will become easier as a result.
43. The recommendations and indicators provided in the November-1997 inter-agency gender mission are not fully and explicitly incorporated by PI or component project priorities or strategy documents.
44. Like other social and community oriented issues, gender concerns need to be shared across the programme to build coherent and common approaches. At

present, it suffers from an absence of critical discussion and coherent thinking, and by a low commitment to learning. To date, little strategic, linkage-oriented programming efforts have made in support of Afghan women.

### **Micro-credit**

48. Different forms of credit are used by the agencies in support of respective activities, including, income generation, privatization, seeds multiplication, support for vulnerable groups, and the creation of revolving funds as a means of community empowerment. This seems to reflect a programme-wide consensus on the need for creating local investment opportunities in a cash poor environment.
49. Among the PI partners, ARRP has operated the largest credit programme, amounting to over \$ 420, 000 and covering several hundred villages. Village funds are set up through income-generating activities supported by an initial start-up investment provided in cash or equipment. The funds operate on a locally derived loans system called “Beitul Maal”, the terms of which are culturally familiar to users. Village funds are modest in size, mainly support small-income generating projects and are held in Afghan currency. By contrast, district funds may reach \$ 15,000, and are used for substantial agricultural programmes.
50. Community Fora likewise receive an initial start-up investment of \$9,900 based on evidence of sufficient neighbourhood interest, organizational capacity and the submission of viable projects for income generation and cost recovery. On this basis, revolving funds are created to support management costs and community services, such as clinics, schools and youth recreation activities, provided by the Fora.
51. For their part, CDAP implementing partners provide credits of \$100-\$200 directly to beneficiaries for income generation. The credit is obtained after vocational training, recovered after 22 months, and then revolved. Start up credits have also been issued by FAO in support of its dairy production cooperatives, and to women’s groups engaged in livestock-related income support projects.
52. Due to the lack of impact data, the Mission is unable to conclude on the effect of credit provision on programme objectives, nor its sustained impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries. However, the Mission noted that credit has had synergetic value among the component programmes. Cases in point are the selection by local *shura* of disabled persons benefiting from CDAP credit support or, on a larger scale, the use of revolving funds in support of FAO seeds multiplication programmes. At the moment, these links are not fully developed and should be considered as part of future programming.

53. To variable degrees, credit provision has had an effect in producing a sense of local responsibility and participation in the development process, by raising individual stakes and promoting initiative. This is particularly the case where credit and revolving fund support is accompanied by sound management training and follow-up, as with the urban community programmes.
54. At the same time, the variety and effectiveness of credit schemes currently used across the programme stands as a source of confusion, even friction, to some partners at the Islamabad level, as a result of lack of discussion and information sharing. One independent study has been initiated by ARRP, albeit with conclusions still pending, that could serve as a basis for constructive learning. Along these lines, the Mission identifies the following issues for discussion:
- ❑ The issue of appropriate levels of credit support, as a function of local absorption and management capacity in economically and politically insecure environments.
  - ❑ The issue of transparency, in terms of how some credit funds are managed, distributed and recovered, and by whom.
  - ❑ The issue of appropriate levels of training, in such credit-related areas as funds management, project management, and marketing.

### **Poor and marginalized groups**

55. Many of the partners refer to "the poorest of the poor" as of primary concern under the PI. The programme contains different general and specific methodologies for targeting marginalized groups which appear, in practice, to have varying degrees of success. One criterion contained in the PI's core design is to target isolated areas of the country which are underserved by the international aid community. Another, shared by two of the partners, is to target areas or neighborhoods with high population density so as maximize the human effect of project activities. There is little doubt that these criteria are sound. However, they do not by themselves indicate higher economic or social vulnerability. Ideally, area selection would also be informed by consistent food security indicators, and take account of existing local patterns of production, nutritional intake, income and trade.
56. Some partners consider community participation in project selection and implementation as vital to reach the poorest, and have thus encouraged the formation of community-based decision-making and management bodies. The effects of this method on the poor and marginalized are difficult to assess. Arguably, the wider the competence and geographical coverage of local executive bodies, the more dedicated they are to serving general interests as opposed to special needs of the most vulnerable.

57. Working through local structures involves the activation of internal, often invisible social processes, which inevitably reflect the dynamics and individual power within the community. This renders the tracking the actual distribution of benefits difficult. In many of the rural areas, *shura*-selected beneficiaries encountered by the mission appeared to be relatively well off, prominent community members. In one case, a fodder crops beneficiary was found to own some 30 *jeribs* of land and own 35 heads of cattle. A UNOPS-supported drinking well was located at the doorstep of his new house, which several paid workers were in the process of completing. The Mission noted that beneficiary's brother was a member of the local *shura*. In another case, a *shura* member was found to be the contractor for a project to provide shelter to widows. Similar instances have been documented elsewhere<sup>5</sup>) It is difficult to tell if such cases are exceptional, or whether they constitute a consistent pattern. At any rate, they point to some of the potential risks of using community-based methodologies uncritically in attempts to reach the poorest and most vulnerable.
58. In other cases, PI partners have combined community-building methods with measures to ensure a more prominent representation of the interests of the most vulnerable. Under the disabled programme, community support has been combined with direct targeting to ensure delivery of services and benefits. Of the beneficiaries interviewed by the Mission, disabled men, women and children were found to be, without comparison, among the poorest and least self-reliant.
59. The Mission encourages PI partners to openly compare and discuss the strengths and weakness of respective community-building methodologies in reaching the poor and marginalized. Programme-wide improvement would ideally be explored as part of the upcoming formulation exercise.

### **Sustainability of project results and supported institutions**

60. The sustainability of both infrastructure inputs and local organisations is implicitly linked in the PI programme document. The main vehicles for this are the empowerment of the community to plan and decide, organizational capacity building of national implementing partners, and training in both technical and vocational areas.
61. Under the current programme, a key obstacle in this respect is that sustainability is itself inherent to the developmental process, and cannot be expected to occur under what is, at best, a "rehabilitation" programme timeframe.

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<sup>5</sup> Donini et al.: "Afghanistan: Coordination in a Fragmented State". Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 1996 (pp.33-34).

62. Moreover, sustainability strategies do not appear to have been built in to programme design and implementation at the outset of the programme: Advance measures to calculate appropriate levels of financial support against potential recurring costs, to anticipate the degree of long-term community participation, or to plan exit arrangements, have generally not been taken. With the possible exception of urban community projects in the Mazar area (unverified), the Mission takes the view that sustained results have yet to be attained in both the infrastructure and institutional sectors.

### **Resource and efficiency aspects**

63. PI budgets are currently affected by the remote-control character of programme management and implementation, and in some areas, by real geographic and security constraints on the movement of staff and supplies. Constraints on current programmes are likely to increase as the level of new resourcing shrink in the upcoming period. Given this the following should be considered among options to increase programme efficiency:

64. The option of “Afghanisation” has been raised with the Mission on numerous occasions, not just as a measure of cost efficiency, but also enhanced regional programming and knowledge transfer. In the view of the Mission, this option should be pursued but needs to be carefully weighed, in close consultation with senior national staff, in terms of potential personal risks incurred as well as programme integrity.

65. The question of re-calibrating the current balance between high cost infrastructure inputs, and lower cost support for social processes and (importantly) services, should be considered as an option, not only of cost reduction but equally within a broader logic of better sustainability.

## V. INSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER LINKAGES

1. The PI provides rehabilitation and development support in a complex political and economic setting, involving a number of other aid agencies and within a structure of coordination that has been the subject of particular attention by the UN system and the donor community. It is therefore important to situate the work of the PI within the broader context of conditions in Afghanistan, and of international initiatives to advance the process of reconciliation and peace-building.

### **Breakdown of central political authority**

2. **The War Economy.** For the best part of ten years, Afghanistan has been in the throes of a civil war, which has led to the progressive collapse of state institutions, population displacements and to the exodus of national skilled manpower on a massive scale. The conflict has still to run its full course. Although the Taliban movement is in control of some 80 per cent of the national territory, and has been able to re-establish security in the areas of its control, the current situation is best described as a military stalemate.
3. The predominantly agrarian economy has progressively been reduced to one of subsistence, with trade in agricultural produce limited to regional and urban markets able to offer supplies of basic consumer goods. Industry and services consist almost exclusively of a vigorous informal sector. Similar conditions prevail in areas of the north-east, which are controlled by the Northern Alliance.
4. Although the food situation has improved somewhat in the last two years, self-sufficiency is not yet attained and food security is precarious in some regions, among IDPs, refugee returnees and the urban poor. As a result of a prolonged drought affecting the 1998-99 growing season, the annual food deficit is estimated to worsen and amount to about 750,000 tons, most of which is covered by imports from Pakistan. For 1999, food aid channeled through WFP has been committed to the tune of 120,000 tons.
5. In terms of skills, the country is in a state of human resource depletion on a grand scale. Over the last twenty years, over 700,000 Afghans have left the country, a measure of the brain drain which is still ongoing. Were it not for the work of NGOs and UN agencies which employ about 20,000 staff, a large number of them with professional skills, the exodus of skilled manpower is likely to have been even greater. The PI alone benefits from the services of about 400 trained Afghan personnel.
6. Social services have virtually disappeared. More than half of all rural health centres has ceased to exist, and the remaining ones are barely functioning. Primary school enrolment and the number of primary school teachers have dropped by some 80 per cent. Secondary education has fallen dramatically, and tertiary education is virtually

non-existent. Two generations have in fact been lost to the country and to its development.

7. At a national level, the economy is dominated by the transit trade of smuggled consumer goods from Dubai to Pakistan, estimated to amount to over US\$ 2.5 billion or about half of Afghanistan's GDP. The trade in opium and opium derivatives was rated in 1998 to have export values amounting to some US\$ 1.2 billion. Both these economic activities constitute the main sources of revenue for the Taliban movement, through levies at border posts and from wholesale merchants. Some financial assistance is also believed to come from Pakistan and from the Persian Gulf states.
8. The bulk of these revenues is used for the war effort. The Taliban does not have at its disposal the financial means or the human resources that are necessary to recreate a viable administration, able to provide for the social and economic needs of Afghan citizens. In general, Taliban authorities maintain an administrative presence at provincial and district levels, largely preoccupied with security, the exercise of political authority, tax collection and the observation of Islamic orthodoxy. Provincial and district offices are only sparsely manned by technical personnel to regulate other areas of economic life. The Department of Rural Rehabilitation, for instance, is only represented in 25 of Afghanistan's 329 administrative districts.
9. This then is the scenario in which the PI programme attempts to give some measure of remedy, in providing a stimulus for normal economic and social activities in selected areas. Social and productive infrastructure that has suffered prolonged neglect is being restored, access to education and health is being provided on a limited scale, and livelihood opportunities are actively being pursued.
10. The impact of PI activities on the dominant war economy as such is probably negligible. PI activities have little bearing on illicit commerce, and PI districts are not significant opium producers. Its work however continues to demonstrate valid alternative employment, and possible exits from generalized poverty. In this regard, it reinforces the aspirations of the large majority of the population that remains engaged in lawful agriculture, industry and trade.
11. **Relations with Taliban authorities.** Under these conditions, aid agencies engaged in rehabilitation and development activities have no real other option but to address their support to local communities, at district level and below. As far as UNDP is concerned, the PI follows this compelling logic.
12. The PI programme, and the UN system for that matter, maintain formal and at times cordial relations with the Taliban authorities. Social and economic assistance cannot be provided in a political vacuum. While UN agencies have imposed certain restrictions on their support, such as barring capacity-building to Taliban ministries and technical departments, the Taliban authorities also have minimum conditions for allowing outside agencies to operate in the areas they control. These are that they should be kept abreast of project plans and activities.

13. Clearly, the Taliban have a self-interest in facilitating UN community-based assistance, up to a point. In all meetings with Taliban office-holders, the Mission was assured that the PI programme had their full support. In several cases, they strongly made the point, albeit somewhat pro forma, that their technical divisions and staff should be more involved in decision-making and in project operations. They generally stopped short however of insisting on prior approval of any planned activities.
14. Many Afghan staff of the PI programme testified that provincial authorities often went out of their way to be helpful. Instances were also cited where requests had been made more forcefully. The situation of national staff is not always an easy one, considering that the principles for UN assistance are not consistently applied by the different organizations in confronting the various situations on the ground. The boundaries between making a polite request and the exertion of pressure are often fluid or moveable.
15. National staff live under varying degrees of psychological pressure and need some form of protection through the presence of an expatriate, who is less exposed and better placed to refuse any inappropriate request. Although the Mission gained the impression that this problem was manageable, incidents continue to occur<sup>6)</sup> and could well occur again in situations of rising political tension.

### **Coordination arrangements at headquarters and in-country**

16. **The Strategic Framework.** From 1996 onwards, there has been a general recognition that countries undergoing complex emergencies need special coordination instruments for international assistance, given weakened national governments and the enhanced role played by the international aid community in such situations. In particular, the need is seen for a strategic framework, elaborated under UN leadership in consultation with all major aid actors, multilateral and bilateral, which would define the principles, goals and institutional arrangements necessary for a more coherent and integrated assistance strategy and programme. In April 1977, the ACC<sup>7)</sup> selected Afghanistan as a test case for the elaboration of such a strategic framework for international aid to the country.
17. Afghanistan is a very suitable test case, given the absence of a functioning central government and the dominant role played by donors and aid agencies in the social and economic life of the country, both in the humanitarian and development sphere. The Strategic Framework comprises the elements of a political strategy as well as of field-based arrangements for common programming. Its overarching goal is to facilitate the transition from a state of armed conflict to an enduring peace through

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<sup>6)</sup> During the Mission's stay in Kandahar, several staff of UN agencies were arrested and held in custody overnight following a large truck-bomb explosion close to the residence of the Taliban leader.

<sup>7)</sup> Administrative Committee for Coordination, a body consisting of the executive heads of UN agencies chaired by the Secretary-General.

mutually reinforcing political and assistance interventions. It further stresses, as a paramount consideration, that efforts should be directed to creating a process that would be sustainable and imprinted with the sense of national ownership.

18. The enunciation of five key objectives, criteria or themes, against which programmes and projects should be assessed and prioritized, is especially relevant to the present evaluation. These objectives are:
- ❑ the alleviation of human suffering
  - ❑ the protection and advancement of human rights, with particular emphasis on gender
  - ❑ the provision of basic social services
  - ❑ the empowerment of Afghans, both women and men, to build sustainable livelihoods
  - ❑ the return of refugees from neighbouring countries
19. These strategic goals are expressed in very general terms. The Mission holds that the activities embraced by the PI programme respond to all of them, to varying degrees. The purpose of alleviating human suffering, while normally seen as a humanitarian or relief undertaking, is also served by the rehabilitation and development work carried out under the PI programme. With respect to the observance of human rights and gender equality, the programme is constrained by the same political and cultural factors as are all other aid programmes, but is seizing whatever opportunities that arise at local levels in a pragmatic way. Many of the focus areas of the PI programme have significant populations of refugee returnees, and their reintegration in their communities of origin is materially supported under the programme, in provinces of Kandahar, Farah, Herat and the Azra/Tezin districts in the eastern provinces.
20. In pursuing these objectives, there has been a tendency to consider the PI programme as focusing uniquely on the fourth objective relating to sustainable livelihoods and the empowerment of Afghan communities. Other objectives and themes are viewed to be predominantly humanitarian in nature. Thus, in the 1999 Consolidated Appeal, rehabilitation and development work is grouped thematically as responding to the fourth objective.
21. The Mission believes that such distinctions and the strict categorization of humanitarian and development activities to a large extent result from a misperception of the nature of the assistance provided.<sup>8</sup>) It noted however that efforts are currently under way to refine the substantive content of the themes listed in the Strategic Framework, in preparation for the 2000 Appeal.
22. **The coordination structure.** In order to secure maximum programme coherence, the coordination of aid programmes to Afghanistan is structured to be as inclusive as possible and to provide for the representation of donors, multilateral and bilateral aid

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<sup>8</sup>) For a more detailed elaboration of the Mission's views on this subject, see Annex E, The Relief/Development Nexus.

agencies, the Red Cross organizations and NGOs. The Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) is at the apex of this structure<sup>9)</sup> and meets every six months in the capital of the country occupying the rotating chair, currently Canada. The last ASG meeting was held in Stockholm in June 1999.

23. ASG membership is replicated in the Afghanistan Programme Body (APB), located in Islamabad, and chaired by the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. It has met three times. In view of its extensive membership, APB has experienced some difficulty in going beyond its information-sharing function and in dealing with policy and substantive issues. Its membership has now been reduced to 15 participants. Five Thematic Groups corresponding to the key objectives of the Strategic Framework have been constituted with donor, UN agency and NGO participation to assist the APB in setting its agenda and to guide the setting of priorities of projects and programmes proposed at the field level.
24. Field level coordination is to be ensured through the establishment of Regional Coordination Bodies (RCB) in five regions and two sub-regions of Afghanistan, centered at Kabul (sub-office in Bamyan), Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif (sub-office in Faizabad), and Jalalabad, with members drawn from UN agencies and NGOs working in the area. A Regional Coordination Officer (RCO) reporting to the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator is to be assigned to each region, as facilitator and provider of common services.
25. The regional coordination system is very much in the process of formation and will need to be tested over time. The Mission noted that the system is not yet fully understood locally. It will take time to become functional. Many NGOs are hesitant as regards its programming role and believe that their interests may be neglected. RCBs have so far been constituted in only three regions, and RCOs appointed for five regions. RCBs are to have a rotating chair and to be backed up by sectoral or technical working groups on which interested stakeholders are represented. The most advanced is the RCB/RCO establishment in Kabul (Central Region), where agreed terms of reference have been adopted, an RCB chairperson chosen, and technical groups are in place. It may well be the only RCB that can contribute meaningfully to this year's programming exercise and set a pattern for the work of other RCBs.
26. From the perspective of the PI, with its multi-sectoral interests and large number of NGO implementation partners, the regional coordination system offers distinct advantages. Once regional and common programming is fully functional, PI programmes and activities can be properly integrated in region-based plans, affecting not only PI focus areas but also other parts of the region concerned.

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<sup>9)</sup> Within the UN Secretariat, a Task Force on Afghanistan has been established under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General, with participation of the concerned UN political and operational agencies, including the World Bank. Other non-UN organizations are invited as appropriate. The Task Force meets on a yearly basis to review progress.

## Principled Common Programming

27. The regional coordination system is designed as the primary instrument for ensuring that the programming process is field-driven and coordinated at its source, emphasizing the programme dimension of constituent projects and discouraging projects from being conceived and funded in isolation, as was earlier so often the case. The APB, for its part, consolidates submissions from the various regions and makes a final ruling on priorities, in preparation for the annual Appeal.
28. Coordination at the regional level is also to help ensure that the policies and principles governing international assistance, recommended by the UN in June 1997 and reinforced with the adoption of the Strategic Framework, are as far as possible applied in a consistent fashion.
29. **The issue of principles.** These principles relate in the main to gender issues and specifically direct that the rehabilitation of the socio-economic infrastructure in the country must benefit men and women equally, in terms of participation and results. The declaration of principles leaves the door open to the withdrawal of assistance, should the authorities fail to accommodate the conditions stipulated. Other principles relate to the advancement of human rights, impartiality in the provision of support, which should be extended on the basis of needs without any form of discrimination. Aid should furthermore be a part of the overall effort to achieve peace and provided only where it can be reasonably determined that political and military advantage will not accrue to any of the warring parties.
30. The implications of applying conditionality have been hotly debated by donors and aid actors, given the prospect that humanitarian aid, including support for rehabilitation objectives, could be politicized further. In addition, the point is often made that the principle-centered approach risks being counter-productive. The basic contradictions of the conditional application of principles with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions explicitly barring conditionality remain unresolved.
31. There is little doubt that, were the condition of full gender parity enforced, the PI programme, as presently configured, would be unable to operate. A pertinent question is whether the principles have in any way modified project approaches. The Mission believes that, as a minimum, the general discussion of these principles has served to sensitize programme leadership and staff to the problem, and to follow up on opportunities to reach women that would otherwise not have been exploited. The scope for individual initiatives in this regard is certainly present. Cultural practices and the potential for women's participation in social and economic life vary considerably from area to area, even in contiguous districts in areas controlled by the Northern Alliance, as was abundantly clear to the Mission during its visit to Badakhshan.
32. The political and cultural hurdles are formidable. In practice, aid agencies attempt to steer along a middle course, exploiting as far as possible openings on the ground to

promote change. Generally, flexibility has pride of place, and a field-oriented application of principles has been adopted, much in line with the recommendations of the inter-agency gender mission that visited Afghanistan in late 1997. By and large, the PI programme adheres to this general pattern in addressing the gender issue.

33. **Common programming.** In terms of common programming and the Appeal process, a major drawback as far as the PI is concerned, is that its rehabilitation and development work is unlikely to be fully funded for more than annual segments. The PI programme can however contribute in an important way. Because of its focus on developing channels of communication and consultation with community-based organizations, the PI programme is in a position to add the voice of the recipient communities to the process of programming and help articulate their wishes in the selection of priorities.
34. As stated above, common programming originating in the regions has some distance to go before it is accepted as a valid instrument. The present somewhat top-heavy coordination structure, with its thematic groups located in Islamabad, is not in all respects conducive to a region-based prioritization of interventions. Ideally, and to facilitate the work of the RCBs, the technical groups making project submissions should themselves make a first screening of programmes on the basis of the key objectives of the Strategic Framework. Under the present arrangements, there is a risk that priority-setting in the preparation of the annual Appeal is shifted to the thematic groups and the APB located in Islamabad. In such a case, participating NGOs not represented centrally could well lose faith in the process as an equitable arrangement and as being in their best interests.

### **Political peace-building strategies**

35. The Strategic Framework stresses that successful peace-building in the field requires a strengthening of the links between the political process and the assistance programme. Stated differently, the assistance programme should at all times be consistent with the strategies pursued by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), and support any international, regional or local mechanisms for political dialogue that are established. In line with this approach, UNSMA produced a paper for the Stockholm meeting of the ASG outlining the actual and potential scope for cooperation between the political and humanitarian effort in promoting peace.
36. Such expositions usually stop short of defining specific measures. By and large, peace-making by diplomatic means and peace-building through economic assistance are pursued along two parallel tracks which rarely interact except by way of continuous information-sharing. Similarly, the work of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights appears to have little practical bearing on the programmes carried out by aid agencies. The proposed designation by UNSMA of outposted Civil Affairs

Officers in the principal regions of Afghanistan could expand the interface between the two tracks but is at this stage an untested approach.

37. Some argue that the value of external assistance is hardly of the magnitude to provide leverage in the political and military stakes.<sup>10)</sup> Others, placing limits to the humanitarian imperative, hold that the provision of assistance relieves the authorities of both parties from pressures and obligations to allocate resources for the welfare of the people. These resources, estimated at 65 per cent of revenues, are instead used to feed the conflict.
38. The PI programme document states, as it were by definition, that community-based rehabilitation and development assistance have demonstrated their potential to achieve a positive impact on the peace process by providing a greater sense of normalcy and stability, opportunities for constructive employment and incentives motivating people to disengage from conflict.
39. It is hard to gainsay general assumptions of this nature, and even more difficult to provide concrete examples of their validity. The Mission was informed that in one Kandahar district, the intervention of district *shura* elders with the Taliban authorities had halted a military recruitment drive in the district. In another case in Badakhshan, the Faizabad district *shura* was reported to have successfully defused a violent dispute between two local commanders. Reports of this kind are of course difficult to verify.

### **Relations with NGOs**

40. Support to national NGOs is part of the PI programme strategy to strengthen and build capacity among organizations of civil society or the private sector. While often handling larger amounts of money than national NGOs, international NGOs are a clear minority of implementing partners in all five constituent projects; international NGOs in turn often also draw on the human resources of national NGOs.
41. There are about 200 NGOs active in Afghanistan, 30 of them international, grouped in four coordinating bodies. Only the Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) has international NGO members. In addition, there is a group of some 10 reasonably well equipped quasi-NGOs that are in fact remnants of former government departments and whose status in respect to current authorities is somewhat uncertain.
42. The reliance on NGOs is not the same in all projects. The FAO livestock project has entered into programme agreements with in all 43 national and international NGOs and other bodies, six of them with contracts exceeding US\$ 100,000. The largest contract amount, with a German-based NGO, is budgeted at US\$ 406,000. The Crops development project also relies heavily on NGOs for its seed multiplication programme. In the case of the rural rehabilitation programme, attempts are

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<sup>10)</sup> See Barnett Rubin: Report on Trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

increasingly made to engage the services of NGOs through the district *shuras*, as a way of transferring monitoring responsibilities and a sense of ownership to these entities. Habitat, for its part, has pursued a policy of minimizing the use of NGOs.

43. The ARRP has established region-based rosters of NGOs, whose human and financial qualifications are examined before they are listed on the roster. Only NGOs listed can compete for contracts, and poor performance may result in their removal from the roster. Other agencies on occasion consult this roster.
44. None of the national NGOs has been established for not-for-profit purposes or have a constituent membership. The designation of these organizations as NGOs is therefore in part a misnomer, depending on the meaning given to this term. In particular, NGOs engaged in construction jobs, be it buildings, road works or hydraulic structures, are in reality private contractors operating commercially. This of course does not detract from the general policy of favouring their employment as sub-contractors for project work, as purveyors of public goods.
45. Several international NGOs are critical of the PI programme, as distinct from the work of the individual agencies involved and specific project components, stating that a large gap existed between the achievements claimed by the programme and reality. Others did not believe in its structured approach to community mobilization. The familiar complaint that NGOs are treated as sub-contractors rather than partners remains a vexed issue. One large international NGO observed that although it received financing from PI projects, contributing also resources of its own, it had no influence whatsoever in the management of the programme.

### **Refugee repatriation**

46. Refugees continue to return from neighbouring countries, but the pace of repatriation is slow, and some 2.5 million still reside outside Afghanistan. About 10,000 returnees are reported to have moved back to districts bordering on the countries of asylum in the first six months of the year.
47. Virtually all PI focus districts have significant numbers of returnees that have repatriated at various periods. In some districts, returnees make up the majority of the population and have rebuilt their original communities. The PI programme is a logical extension of the reintegration packages provided by UNHCR and of its quick impact projects. Systematic coordination with UNHCR of the support provided by two PI projects, along with that of other UN agencies, is being attempted in the District of Azra in the Logar province, with Japanese financing, as part of the incipient common programming.

### Opium poppy cultivation

42. The cultivation of opium poppy continues to thrive and Afghanistan has now emerged as the world's leading producer of opium. According to a recent report prepared by the UN Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), production has more than doubled over the past year, reaching some 4,600 tons of opium. The area under cultivation is reported to have risen by 43 per cent to 91,000 ha, virtually all of it in Taliban-controlled areas.
43. Poppy cultivation is not a major factor in PI focus districts, and many of the district *shuras* encountered stated unequivocally that there was no opium produced in their districts. With its emphasis on sustainable alternative livelihoods, the PI programme is a natural ally of UNDCP in its efforts to encourage crop substitution. So far, joint activities have not met with any success. The Mission was informed that in one Kandahar district, where project-supplied improved wheat seed and fertilizer were provided against a community commitment to reduce poppy acreage by 50 per cent and burn an equivalent part of any opium produced, acreage in the 1998-99 growing season had actually expanded.
44. While many factors are involved, such as the risk of crop failure, credit and advance purchases by traders from poppy farmers, crop substitution remains a key strategy for UNDCP. Under poor irrigation conditions, the benefit to farmers growing poppy is estimated to be 2.5 times that of growing wheat, labour costs included. With good irrigation, the benefit is reduced to a ratio of 1.5, pointing to a general strategy of improving irrigation systems at the village level. Relevant also to PI objectives is the stated intention of UNDCP to involve district *shuras* more closely with undertakings to reduce poppy acreage, rather than relying exclusively on NGO implementing partners to negotiate such arrangements as go-betweens with the offending villages.

### Mine action programme

45. Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mine-infested countries of the world, with land mine accidents still occurring at the rate of about 300 a month. Mine-clearing operations have been carried out over the past ten years with significant results, at the pace of approximately 35 sq km per annum, for a total area of 183 sq km made free of mines. The total remaining area to be cleared is estimated to be 705 sq km, of which 45 per cent is considered to be high priority areas.
46. PI focus districts are not heavily contaminated, although 118 sq km in the province of Kandahar have yet to be cleared, half of which is judged to be high priority areas. The UN mine action agency, which is run by UNOCHA, relies on national and international NGOs as operators of its mine-clearing and mine awareness programme. It welcomes requests for assistance from other UN aid agencies and NGOs, but stated that its invitations to consult on the designation of priority areas had generally met with a poor response. The Mission believes that this is an area where the PI programme agencies can be more proactive than is apparently the case at present.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Area-focused development**

1. The PI programme consists to all intents and purposes of what is commonly known as area development schemes or programmes, which have become current in many parts of the world during the last 15 years. By definition, they operate in selected districts or provinces of a country, chosen according to diverse criteria, and attempt to respond to their needs in a comprehensive manner, mobilizing community self-help, local decision-making, civil society organizations and private sector enterprise. Technically, their approach is multi-sectoral, and there is in general built in strong support for group and individual income-generation.
2. The Mission believes that area programmes of this kind have a given place in the present situation in Afghanistan, where social and economic structures are in ruins and government institutions in a state of collapse. Aspiring, and warring, government authorities vie for control of the national territory, and there is as yet little certainty as to what the final outcome will be. The aid community cannot however abandon the long-suffering people of Afghanistan to an increasingly precarious existence. Area-based schemes derive from the compelling logic of the situation of the country as a whole and the actual needs on the ground. There are few other realistic options, in terms of providing outside support for rehabilitation and development.
3. There is a second persuasive logic. Action at the level of local communities at this juncture offer the best prospects of addressing some of the most difficult issues confronting the country, such as human rights observance, gender discrimination, environmental decline in rural and urban areas, and the expanding cultivation of opium poppy. Engaging directly rural and urban communities and civil society affords the best chance of making a difference by creating capacity among communities to help themselves. It can furthermore help lay the foundations of self-government by reviving and fostering traditions of local governance.
4. The principal critique leveled at area-focused development is that it addresses issues of national scope and importance in piecemeal fashion. While some communities may benefit, others will not. The question arises whether sufficient critical mass is present to be catalytic and, by example, create a momentum for spontaneous change, horizontally among other communities and vertically from the bottom up. Such questions are not easily answered, as many complex factors are involved, some of them fortuitous in nature. .

### **Integration through common programming**

5. The appeal of grass-roots development action remains strong. It should be kept in mind that area-focused schemes are not undertaken in isolation and that a good

number of other programmes are underway elsewhere, though not necessarily trying to accommodate multi-sectoral needs. Three of the programmes comprising the PI in fact extend their activities well beyond the PI focus areas, some attempting a national scope wherever access is possible.

6. Region-based common programming under the aegis of RCBs can do much to provide better cohesion to humanitarian and development action on a wider scale, and to integrate area-focused development schemes in the separate regional programmes. This points to the need for reviewing the selection of PI focus areas, the criteria for this selection and the allocation of resources to the different PI areas. It is not the Mission's purpose to make specific recommendations in this regard. However, aside from issues of access and ethnic balance, possible criteria could include
  - ❑ the level of poverty prevailing in the area
  - ❑ the number of refugee and IDP returnees
  - ❑ the extent of opium poppy cultivation
  - ❑ contiguity or proximity of new focus districts with earlier focus areas
  - ❑ presence of other aid programmes
7. It is important that area selection be part of the common programming process, and that a final decision on the areas selected be taken at the level of the APB. In this way, potential donors will be fully associated with the selection procedure and can make their own judgments as to the underlying rationale.
8. Criteria should also be adopted for the phasing out of support. Area development schemes should not be seen as open-ended and automatically rolled over from one funding cycle to the next. In attempting to assess this factor in the districts visited, the Mission gained the impression that area-focused action in the provinces of Kandahar and Farah should now be planned over a further two years, to consolidate the progress made, and subsequently scaled down. Without pronouncing on the justification for the scaling down of support in the Balkh and Mazar PI districts, which has occurred as a result of military developments, the programme has some experience in gauging the consequence of switching resource allocation to other areas and to observe which actions prove sustainable and durable, and which tend to disintegrate.

### **Funding and co-funding**

9. In the final analysis, the future of area-focused development in Afghanistan hinges on the funding that will be available. It is the Mission's understanding that UNDP will not have sufficient resources from its core funds to operate the PI programme on the same scale as it has done earlier, i.e. provide sufficient resources for financing both the PI management structure and a variety of sectoral programmes. This may necessitate changes in the present approach.

10. Similar situations confront UNDP elsewhere when operating area development schemes. It has found in several instances that a viable burden-sharing principle on the part of funding agencies is that UNDP assumes responsibility for establishing the management and implementing structure and bilateral donors provide resources for the various social and economic programmes undertaken.
11. Significantly, this has already happened in the PI programme. Bilateral and multilateral donors have provided cost-sharing resources, trust funds and parallel financing for a variety of activities managed by the PI. Over the two and half years of the PI, these contributions amount in total to over US\$ 14 million. This is nearly half of the original UNDP allocation to the PI programme. In the case of Habitat, the corresponding figure is over 65 per cent.
12. From a planning perspective, the current arrangement for raising funds via consolidated annual appeals is a distinct drawback, where development activities are concerned. Nevertheless, as UNDP is better placed to make commitments over a two-three year period, so as to ensure the necessary programme delivery mechanism, the effect of short-term planning horizons can be minimized. To facilitate donor allocation of programme resources, general acceptance and understanding of such an arrangement should be reached within the framework of the APB and the ASG.
13. At the same time, the management structure of the PI will need to be overhauled and streamlined, and its policy of Afghanization further pursued. This should be accompanied by increased delegation of authority to national regional managers in financial matters, compatible with financial and administrative accountability. In this way, the operational centre of gravity can progressively move in-country and acquire the enhanced sense of national ownership called for in the Strategic Framework.

### **Potential for replication and expansion**

14. On this basis, the Mission believes that the PI undertaking can successfully be carried forward. Its approaches are basically sound. Considerable synergies have been created, more visibly on the ground than in Islamabad, not only as a result of cooperation among the participating agencies, but also with agencies operating outside the PI framework. As detailed elsewhere in this report, a valid contribution is being made to alleviate poverty. Communities are being mobilized for self-help along different tracks; the diverse forms of community organizations created should be allowed to continue to develop their potentials. Different systems of credit for income generation are continuously being tested and should not be seen as competing with each other.
15. Social processes have either been initiated or given impetus under the programme. These should be built upon and consolidated, and the sustainability of project results and institution-building safeguarded. The benefits to the recipient communities consist of increased capacity for self-help, participation and organizational capacity.

This provides communities with greater resilience in facing future problems that may arise, such as crop failures or natural disasters.

16. From the donor perspective, area-focused schemes help ensure that links are established between the ongoing humanitarian action and longer term strategies for rehabilitation and development. This carries with it better potential for cost-effectiveness. Donors furthermore have easy access to an established programme delivery mechanism with technical capacity in specific geographical areas, which can be utilized as they see fit.
17. The delivery mechanism must however continue to be seen as cost-efficient to attract the necessary programme funds. Efficiency and effectiveness have been demonstrated in terms of programme results accounted for in Chapter III. If these conditions continue to be met, there are good reasons for the PI programme to be replicated and even expand. Overall, it is already making a solid contribution to the welfare of the Afghan people; in their interest, the effort should be strengthened and revitalized.

### **Recommendations**

- ◆ The Mission recommends that the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative should be carried forward for a further period of two years in the districts already designated. In view of the possible scaling down of UNDP financing, every effort should be made to maintain a viable programme delivery mechanism; a vigorous fund-raising drive will be needed to secure a volume of co-funding rendering the PI management structure cost-effective. For the immediate or near future, efforts should be made to
  - develop criteria, on the basis of the experience gained so far, for the selection of any new PI districts proposed for area-focused development in future; such criteria as well as the proposed selection of PI-designated districts should be submitted to the APB for a final ruling; in this context, it is equally important to establish in advance exit strategies and agreed criteria for phasing out assistance in specific districts;
  - seek the active association in the PI of an agency with competence in the health sector to ensure a better balance in the multi-sector support provided at district levels;
  - in preparation for the upcoming Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal, integrate as far as possible the various new sectoral projects and sub-projects being formulated in the common programming exercise now underway;
  - in the interest of placing further programme responsibilities in the hands of Afghan staff, increase the delegation of financial and administrative authority, as would be compatible with accountability requirements;

- at the district level, institute the position of Team Leader already existing in some areas, to strengthen leadership among PI staff, rotating this position among the partner agencies.
  
- The Mission recommends that a serious effort be undertaken to monitor more purposefully PI programme performance than hitherto, not only in relation to the overarching goals of the PI itself, but also with respect to the thematic objectives of the Strategic Framework. To this end,
  - UNDP should engage the services of a consultant to identify in collaboration with project managers sets of key impact indicators measuring progress and programme performance against the related objectives; these indicators should be manageable in number and devised for routine monitoring by project staff. Such indicators should be district-specific, gender-disaggregated and fed into the ProMIS data processing system, for mapping and easy tracking;
  - participating projects should establish a common reporting cycle, with outputs and process indicators made specific to PI districts and to common time frames, identifying programme adjustments that are called for.
  
- ◆ The Mission recommends that the programme develop a clear focus on gender issues, building from existing experiences. Efforts require pragmatism and should be anchored within a Women In Development framework. Specific recommended actions include:
  - develop gender-specific SMART (specific, measurable, accurate, relevant and time-bound) objectives and indicators (baseline, process, output and impact) for cross-cutting themes. Attention is drawn to the recommendations, guidelines and indicators proposed in the report of the Inter-agency Gender Mission of November 1997, that should be referred to and be fully incorporated in this process;
  - develop gender-segregated data and information sets, including reporting formats and checklists;
  - develop a strategy and plan for Gender Training, for all stakeholders of PI;
  - commission an anthropological study to develop more thorough understanding of the local knowledge on key gender issues and contextualise these issues against the strategic objectives of PI.
  
- ◆ As regards central programme strategies related to such matters as community mobilization and revolving funds, the Mission believes that that there is virtue in the diversity of approaches being tested and that it would be counter-productive to make them uniform. It however recommends that UNDP take an active lead role in bringing

partner agencies together for periodic discussions on experiences made in regard to the several cross-cutting issues affecting project operations; the development of impact indicators should facilitate the study of comparative data; in this context, it further recommends that

- the various forms of community-based organizations be regularly reviewed in terms of their relative strengths and weaknesses, the degree to which they are sustainable and continue to represent their communities, and the scale of their operations;
  - micro-credit operations be assessed as a function of levels of credit support provided and of absorption capacity, distributional issues, the repayment record, transparency and training needs in the various areas of fund management;
  - policies and procedures adopted by the different projects for targeting women as programme participants, for extending support to the poor and to marginalized groups should be regularly assessed, particularly in the light of the approaches adopted by the various community-based organizations to engage in affirmative action on behalf of disadvantaged categories.
- ◆ Lastly, and on completion of the work to select valid impact indicators, the Mission recommends that follow-up studies be conducted in two vital areas. The first should be devoted to the many variables relating to cost-efficiency and effectiveness programme-wide. A second study should be made on ways and means to concretize, at the operational level, the relationship between the activities undertaken under the PI programme and peace-building, as the over-arching objective contained in the Strategic Framework.

