How to Accommodate the Agenda of the Afghan Government, Local Communities and Development Actors?

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Decades of conflict between the oft-fragmented Afghan centre, peripheral elites, and outside actors has continually broken the fledgling connection between local and central Afghan governance structures. Part of the current Afghan political challenge is to re-establish that connection, through legitimate and accountable local representative bodies. Here the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) fits into the government agenda.

NSP — a World Bank-funded, government (Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development-led programme) — has a double objective: to rebuild (or reframe) both rural infrastructure and civil society. The local governance aspect of NSP educates communities in democratic processes, through community mobilization and the election of Community Development Councils (CDCs). The Facilitating Partner (FP - usually a Non-Governmental Organization or a UN agency) then builds the capacity of the CDC, to prioritize and implement both rural infrastructure and human capital development projects.

NSP is well-understood as a development body: its role as a local governance structure remains ill-defined. This approach reflects the demands of the international community and the ideological atmosphere that surrounds the programme. The need to present donors and the Afghan government with quick and visible results has turned NSP into a hardware-oriented programme, where the construction of small-scale development projects has overshadowed governance aspects. This paper argues that, absent of the institutionalization of CDCs into the larger governmental-administrative framework, the transition of CDCs from development to governance structures is highly dependent on the presence of "strong men" whose interests coincide with, or simply dominate, their community constituency. Strong pre-existing local governance structures can either restrain or encourage the transition of CDCs from rural development tools to governance structures.

The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) staff initialized research in early spring 2006, to assess how NSP effects change (and to what degree) in the pre-existing local governance structures. Complementary to this was a questioning of community perceptions of NSP, both before and during the community mobilization process. This paper considers the example offered by several CDCs in Badakhshan, where ACTED implements NSP across 5 provinces[1]. Badakhshan lies at the extreme Northeast of the country and has always existed on Kabul's periphery, with the state having little or no authority outside of large towns and official border crossings. Due to the province's conflicted past and geographic remoteness, social, religious and military elites hold places of prominence, and often successfully compete for representation at the expense of the central government. CDCs there operate alongside diverse pre-existing governance structures, for both the *Mujihadeen* era and before. The future applicability of such CDCs, as governance bodies, absent the codification of the role of CDCs into law, is thus extremely dependent on local conditions, and in most of the cases, hardly assured.

This paper first examines the local context in which NSP attempts to take root. Then, NSP, *per se*, is analyzed. More precisely, the paper focuses on how the programme is constrained and redefined by its various primary actors, namely the state, the international community and the beneficiaries themselves. Based on the interviews conducted during the research phase, different types of relations between CDCs and traditional governance structures, will be identified. Finally, recommendations will be made so as to enable the continuation of CDCs, both as development tools and as local governance structures.

Governance, Government and the Fragmentation of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is historically a case of governance in lieu of government. The country is traditionally characterized by tensions between the central state and the peripheral elites over sources of political legitimacy, despite attempts of centralization by concurrent Kabul regimes[2]. From the government's perspective, NSP is just but one of these attempts. Since 1978 and the fall of the Daud regime, the country has rarely fit, even the minimal, Weberian definition of a state.

The basic rural governance unit has traditionally been located at the family (*Qawn*) and village levels (Thier and Chopra, 2002:4). The village assembly (*Shura*), an ad-hoc institution, whose functions range from conflict-resolution to the organization of communal work (*Ashar*), remains the primary decision-making structure. Olivier Roy (in Johnson & Leslie, 2005:35) suggests that "real" political life is played out at the local level, and primary loyalty lies within the "solidarity group". Thus, power in rural Afghanistan resides neither in a specific location, nor in a person; it rests upon a kinship network which strikes the uninitiated as elusive.

New sources of power have risen from decades of regional conflict. Local commanders emerged, empowered with money and weapons provided by regional and international actors. Commanders gradually replaced pre-existing power system (Abdullaev, 2004:175). At the end of the Cold War, the Afghan conflict shifted towards a "post nation-state" model of war (Duffield, 2000:47), marked by the development of yet a third layer of power, as regions emerged as semi-autonomous zones, governed by warlords. The merging of the politics of profit and violence facilitated the emergence of regional war economies, based on pre-existing smuggling (and other) networks, thus reproducing decentralized network structures (Duffield, 2003:299).

Years of conflict has, therefore, increased the polarization of local identities and strengthened divisions between both the centre and the periphery, urban and rural; little authority has been exercised from the centre in decades (Goodson, 2003:84; Rubin, 1996). Individual loyalties have always been more local than national; Afghans believe in *their* Afghanistan, not in every Afghan's Afghanistan (Moshref, 2002:33). But the slow progress of the government in asserting itself, and coupled with its lack of legitimacy, has made the peripheries more prone to identity manipulation, with local political entrepreneurs reluctant to release their power to a central authority. In such an uncertain environment, situational identity is more likely to be realized and emphasized. There is not only immediate frustration to build on, but also a long-term problem of lack of both leadership and vision, which could meet local aspirations. This lack of political vision is more than just an Afghan issue; the absence of alternative models to challenge liberal capitalism is a global issue and is reflected in the weakness of the reconstruction process (Johnson & Leslie, 2005:107).

The Case of Badakhshan

Badakhshan is an excellent example of the troubled relationship and traditional distrust between Kabul and its borderlands.

As in most rural areas, village authority traditionally reposed with an Arbab, who governed in consultation with a council of elders, chosen according to their wealth, piety, charisma and age; such a social order is marked by a quasi-automatic granting of authority according to title and status. Problems were solved in the mosque, and more contentious issues were (and are) answered by the forming of an issue-specific *Shura*. Boesen (2004) describes such structures as "in principle, an egalitarian body in which every member has one voice, representing its lineage of its constituent household".

Badakhshan's remoteness, contrary to other regions of Afghanistan, ensured that the Soviet occupation had little influence on traditional local governance structures. But years of instability and civil war, following the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992, marked a general militarization of the local society. The Soviet withdrawal allowed for an expansion of predatory behaviour, by both party-affiliated and non-ideological actors, with some larger commanders becoming warlords and transcending locality (Kakar, 2001:11).

Badakhshan was almost entirely run by commanders affiliated with *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JI)[3]. Their authority overshadowed traditional *Shuras* and Arbabs, as commanders co-opted tribal and *Qawm* networks to centralize their power at the local level. Such co-option extended control over trade routes and rural industries. Their authority was further strengthened by the redistribution of external aid and weapons, as well as, cross-border smuggling[4].

Processes underlying the current centralization of power, and disenfranchisement of local commanders and regional warlords, are gradually arriving in Badakhshan. There, as well as, in Faryab and other areas, the rehabilitation (or even new development) of communications and transportation infrastructure coincides with the arrival of coercive elements, including governmental military forces, and the implementation of demobilization and alternative livelihoods programmes. Occurring in conjunction with such measures, are development programmes, including NSP (World Bank, 2005:3) and the activities of various local and international NGOs.

Development is *never* a neutral activity; it has always gone hand in hand with the assertion of state authority over the provinces. Although local commanders[5] may resent such threats to their power, the notion of a strong government meets wide approbation among Afghans. Kabul's government has, so far, faced difficulties to overcome the power of local political actors in Badakhshan, and has tended to rely either on co-opted local commanders — in-laws, to Tilly — or on rentier systems with appointed provincial governors etc.

Kabul's presence is minimal outside of Faizabad. The provincial governor is appointed by Kabul, but the lack of transparency in the appointment process undermines his legitimacy[6]. Furthermore, to disrupt traditional patron-client relationships, provincial governors tend to originate from outside the province; which add to the distrust, especially in an area as remote as Badakhshan[7].

In consequence, sources of power arise from local actors such as district leaders, usually local commanders[8], established within and well-known by the local population, and akin to Tilly's stationary bandits. Power in Faizabad does not lie so much with the provincial governor or the chief of police (a less powerful position in Afghanistan, relative to other countries), but with a Faizabad-born *Jamiat* commander, who allegedly controls much of the opium traffic in the province[9]. He and other non-government elements exercise control over other government employees, including select elements of the police and military.

NSP is super-imposed upon this social topography from afar. Commanders and elites *can* and *do* interfere. Areas of factional conflict have, for instance, resulted in the attempted co-option of some CDCs[10].The ground upon which the NSP is being implemented is a complex one, and the work of Facilitating Partners is easily constrained by both the governmental agenda and the opinions of the recipient communities of what, exactly, NSP is, and what Community Development Councils could grow to be.

The National Solidarity Programme: Conflicting Roles

As mentioned previously, NSP objectives are twofold: it serves both as a rural development project and a local governance tool, through the creation of solid links, between the province and the village. By its nature, NSP finds itself at the nexus of different,

and often contradictory, agendas and sets of interests. Its purpose as a development tool is evident to beneficiaries; until the roles and duties of CDCs in relation to district-level government are codified by Kabul, its function in relation to local governance is less known at the village level.

State-building and Decentralization

The civil society aspect of NSP educates communities in democratic processes, through community mobilization, leading to gender-inclusive election of CDCs via secret ballot. Facilitating Partners then build the capacity of CDCs to identify, prioritize and implement rural infrastructure and human capital development projects. The expected outcome is the creation of a representative village-level governance body, able to execute small scale development projects, as well as, represent the community to the outside, especially to NGOs and the Afghan government at the district level (World Bank, 2005:2).

A key element of Afghanistan's future stability concerns whether, Kabul relates directly to the districts or interacts through a provincial-level authority (Johnson et al, 2003:20). NSP attempts to balance between the need for centralization, in order to immediately consolidate power and enforce peace and stability *from above*, and the need for decentralization to secure equal long-term distribution, and guarantee participation *from below*. Such duality can and does generate conflict between the core and the periphery, the interests of which often differ; a short-term example can be found in poppy eradication campaigns in Badakhshan, as here, the governmental agenda, tailored towards obligations to the international community, is likely to clash with the needs of the local community[11]. The model chosen by Kabul faces a stark paradox: state power must properly exist before it may be decentralized (USIP, 2003:4), and Kabul has none. Collaborative and stable power arrangements, with a degree of legitimacy – and thus, durability – are the end products of internal processes, rather than a path solely constructed by foreign finance (Fowler, 2000:4). Again, strengthening civil society requires high levels of central state-capacity and cooperation (Platteau & Abraham, 2002). The notion of governance, in the spirit of the CDCs, is not something comprehended by many in local governments.

Donor-agenda and Community Participation

Like development itself, the process of working at the community level is not neutral. It possesses a normative and inherently political character, that implies formulating ideas and knowledge about *what people should do and how they should do it* (Gordon *et al*, 1993).

The concepts underlying NSP — village-level participation and "partnership" with local communities (assumed to bring greater productivity at lower cost) — have recently gained currency among bilateral and multilateral agencies (Brand, 2001:962; Fowler, 2000:3). NSP is implemented through select NGOs. Yet NGOs — which by their nature accrue no profit — are dependent on governmental and multilateral aid agencies. Their accountability is, therefore, primarily to such donors, and secondarily to beneficiaries. NGOs maintain neutrality; they divert their efforts away from social mobilization, and towards the simpler (and fundable) provision of services (Malena, 2000:20; Hamilton, 2000:49-50). Such agencies work with the desire to both: a) control uncertainty; and, b) order the development process into systematic and rational stages. This control orientation reflects agency

concerns with short-term outputs, and often involves the translation of problems and solutions into chains of causality, which, in turn, generates uniform strategies and "blueprints" with standardized ingredients, in order to address varied and multi-faceted realities (Crewe and Young, 2002:9; Green 2003:128-129). Such processes reduce political and social issues to technicalities, to be remedied by routine and neutral policy tools (Robertson, 1984:3, 7-9)[12]. But it must be acknowledged that local communities (CDCs), as well as, the personalities and difficulties inherent in them, are unique. Control orientation is inapplicable in such circumstances, and furthers the divide between reality "in the field" and reality, converted and transmitted via Microsoft excel spreadsheet or Word document, for the consumption of Bruxelles, DC or London. In regard to the historical behaviour, of both donors and development, as a whole, even when sets of rules, standards and criteria create a mould, which implies that beneficiaries participate in the project planning process, they actually have little effect on how projects are conceptualized (Mosse, 2001:19) by both donors and implementers. NSP is rare, in that the community, within broad parameters, defines its own projects and executes them accordingly.

Community and Individuality; Democratic Discourse and Traditional Structures

As analyzed previously, situational identity, as part of the *Qwam*, is prevalent in Afghanistan. Imposing democratic discourses and practices, within rural communities, is therefore, extremely constrained. Democracy is not guaranteed; nor is the disenfranchisement of elites and patrons.

CDCs meet other pre-existing governance structures which emerge from below — either the traditional Arbab-led structure, resplendent with elders, elites and mullahs, or less benign, newer structures of commander and military *Shura*; they often meet some combination of both. The electioneering of candidates is forbidden during CDC elections; this measure intends to reduce the likelihood of elite capture, electioneering of another kind is still taking place at an informal level. Powerful people, within the community, do not need electioneering; they are already known, and their power depends on wealth and pre-existing support; such influence cannot simply be undone by the concept of secret ballot. Such elite control trade and land; they pay for day labour; they may control trade and smuggling routes. In rural communities, often markedly illiterate, it is expected that this elite will be elected to CDCs, because they are either respected or feared, but most often, simply by force of habit and deference. *Mullahs* are usually elected because they are the traditional problem solvers, and because they are, generally speaking, the only literate persons in the community. The democratic discourse, built upon the precept of one person, one vote, is constrained in the local context, by both lack of education and entrenched social pressure.

Therefore, CDCs remain likely to be drawn from the pool of local elite[13], many of whom are adept at manipulating participatory methods, by representing their own interests as community concerns (Crewe and Harrison, 1998:70-75), thereby hindering possible redresses to structural inequalities (Fisher, 1997:455) which exist at the village level, and which the CDC, it is hoped, shall rectify. Not all "development" discourses are entirely hegemonic, and constrain beneficiaries in a deterministic fashion (Grillo 1997:20-21). Perceptions of the NSP, by local communities, allow them to explore the utility of CDCs; development is, therefore, re-appropriated and re-negotiated, through popular understanding and practices (Scott, 1998:353). What is super-imposed upon the community, from above, can be shaped according to circumstance and personality, and is thus owned, from below.

Local Actors and NSP CDCs – Methods of Accommodation

The primary theme in interviews concerned were: who held power in the village, both nominally and actually; what was expected from a CDC; what, if any, additional role outside the scope of the block-grant, the CDC has taken on itself; the composition of the CDC, in

regard to traditional power holders and vested interests; and what role was envisioned for the post-block grant CDC.

Expectations and Perceptions of NSP in non-NSP Villages

In new villages, some interviews were marked by a degree of defiance — not against NSP or other government intrusions so much, as the community's general perception of NGOs, whose efficiency is not positively rated. Some distrusted the idea of NSP, because they regarded it as just another survey conducted by foreigners, from which little good would come. Other interviewees displayed a marked bitterness, from past experiences, with international organizations, and also, *Kabul*, and even, in remote villages, *Faizabad* — a word that was sometimes used to signify the government.

> "At the beginning of NSP, the people distrusted it and did not believe it would work or that the money would come. Soon people became interested when they started to believe in it".
> -CDC member, Torgani Village, Faizabad district

NSP, unlike other programmes, is a known quantity. The difficulties inherent in year 1 implementation — which, due to delays in block-grant allocations, fostered a sense of betrayal in some communities, bordering on violence directed at FPs — have softened, as communities look to the example of earlier NSP communities. There is some trust at the community level that money will actually be spent, although in some occasions, confusion remains[14].

Non-regard of NSP as a Governance Tool

> "NSP unites and makes the solidarity between the people. But the mosque is where the decisions are taken".
> -Elder, Khoja Abdul Maroof Village, Faizabad

Far from the local governance structure, envisioned by FPs and Kabul / MRRD, NSP is initially understood at the village level, purely as a development programme. Decision-making and problem-solving often remains the sole domain of the elders, and in the mosque. In Khoja Abdul Maroof village, then undergoing community mobilization, the elders told us that, once the CDC is elected, it will have their support. For these elders, and others, there stands a clear division of role and function between the traditional structures and the CDC; when pressed for possibilities of what else a CDC may be useful for, outside of the life of the block grant, most elders volunteered only, that the CDC might be useful for the organizing of *Ashar*, or communal voluntary labour[15]. They regarded themselves as the future CDC. "We will be the NSP", stated one member of the Ulema, in Batosh village.

Traditional elite and new CDCs

Contrary to the data collected by UN-Habitat, in the areas where they are the NSP FP in Badakhshan, field research demonstrates mixed CDC electoral results, with regard to substantive inclusion of new, "non traditional" local leaders. Reasons for this lie in the relative remoteness of the area (which allows for the control of information, through infrequent and limited sources, and the filtering of new ideas), the extremely low level of literacy (which further limits the flow of information, and opens, those effected, up to increased influence from above), the commander- and elite- oriented village structure (which again, due to remoteness, sees little, in the form of competing ideas), and most importantly, the strong economic networks supporting local stakeholders.

In Badakhshan, interviewees indicated that criteria for potential election to CDCs are the same as for membership in the traditional *Shura* (although one is freely elected by all, whereas the other is elected by elder men only): age, piety, land ownership (almost all CDC members own land), and other economic and military preconditions. Women, in principle, are accepted in CDCs by interviewees – as long as they are pious, middle-aged and educated. Such rural women face a Catch-22, where they may be accepted in a leadership position if they are educated, but they are traditionally denied an education. Also, the very term *education* may need to be refined in this rural context. As a result, elders and / or commanders were part of the CDCs, and such persons often served as the head, deputy head, or cashier at least. In the limited instance, where a CDC is elected, which does not contain at least a few elders, it is evident that, although the CDC maintains and controls the block grant, the earlier structures of local governance maintain suzerainty; here the transition of the CDC from development to governance tool, is likely, not to occur. In such villages, the CDC works on sub-project proposals; the elders' council remains as the primary problem-solving and local governance tool of the village. Again, the voting-specific issues, resulting from traditional patron-client relationships, in rural Afghanistan, will not be avoided; small settlement size and illiteracy heighten the problem. As a result, co-option by traditional elite or commanders, is the situation most CDCs find themselves in. A strong man remains a strong man, whether the vote is secret or not. In NSP villages, where local commanders developed their own military *Shura* power-structure before NSP's arrival, CDCs consequently replicated the military *Shura*. In Torgani and Shura-Baq villages, for example, the heads of both CDCs are local commanders; the entire cast of each CDC is DDR'd *Mujahideen*. Thus, a military *Shura* becomes a development tool; a power transition has occurred, but only in name. In a continuation of the premise of hereditary power, and focusing on the evolution of local power structures through the years, it is interesting to note that in Shura-Baq, all the members of the CDC — the commander (an ex-army officer) and several ex-*Mujahideen* — are the children of the previous Arbab and his *Shura* of elders. This is not exclusively negative. Depending on context and personality, pre-existing local governance structures are replicated, positively influencing the transition of the CDC from a development to a governance tool, but not in a way that the donor or the FP contemplated. In particular cases, the presence of commanders – whose agenda coincides with those of the government, as in Torgani - may indicate the withering of traditional elite authority to the benefit of the entire community.

Therefore, the inclusiveness of a given CDC is highly reliant on the local context and level of education. Salman-e-Fars, Faizabad district, is a semi-urban area, located a few kilometres from Faizabad centre. The population is markedly more transitory and mobile; consequently, traditional governance structures are weak and the *Manteqa* population is more open to external influence. CDC members are government employees — mostly teachers in the Ministry of Education. Women are active participants in the CDC, and even challenge the authority of local commanders[16]. The authority of this CDC has expanded, beyond the management of the block grant, to conflict-resolution and communal land management, in collaboration with three neighbouring CDCs. A new "elite" step in when there is room for it.

CDCs' Relations to the Central Government

> "No outside source will ban our decisions. We took part in the struggle to remove bad regimes. We had our *Jihad*. We will have another *Jihad* if bad decisions are made".
>
> -Mullah, Batosh Village

The autonomy of the community *vis-à-vis* the central government is highly valued. As mentioned previously, national cohesion presupposes the construction of a national identity, which will help legitimate state infrastructure and institutions. As Esman (2004:160) claims,

service provision and effectiveness are not sufficient for the state; it must also be seen as legitimate, and deserving obedience and respect. So far, Kabul has never met these requirements, and Badakhshan has had no other choice but to rely on a more narrow situational identity.

> "The governor is forced to leave when another can pay more for his position. It does not have to do with us; we will not receive anything from them".
> -Elder, Khoja Abdul Maroof Village.

In addition, the patron-client relationship can be so strong that the very concept of relations, between village and government, are meaningless. But depending on the political affiliation of the village leader — for instance, a commander affiliated to *Jamiat* — the local opinion towards Kabul can change.

> "We want this kind of government. We allowed this kind of government to come into being. We have volunteered for DDR. I tell my people: the foreigners are needed, and Kabul is now good. We need strength in Kabul".
> –Mohammed Amin, ex-*Jamiat* Commander & CDC leader, Torgani Village

Depending on the circumstances, the concept of community representation is progressing, especially *vis-à-vis* previously non-elected leaders, and a province-level government, perceived as corrupt and unaccountable to its supposed citizenry.

> "The elders were unofficial, but we are elected officials… in disputes (between people), we will tell the government what the truth is, who is right and who is wrong. We are the representatives".
> –Commander Sher, CDC leader, Shura Baq Village

Lastly, NSP is a governance programme, but paradoxically, government visibility is limited. The sentiment of one villager in Shura-Baq - "Why doesn't the government come and do this stuff directly"? is a common one.

Which future for the CDCs?

The success of NSP, as a development tool, is unchallenged and is understood by involved communities as such: a means to receive funds, a vehicle in which to liaise with NGOs and implement small-scale development projects. As far as the governance aspect of NSP is concerned, the results are more mixed, which endanger the sustainability of the CDCs after the expiration of the block-grants.

Almost all interviewees – CDC members and villagers alike – envision the future of their CDCs through a purely developmental paradigm. The council will remain in charge of representing the community to solicit NGOs, liaise with the Rural Development Department, handle development funds and manage the participation of the community in new development projects. As such, the CDC is conceptualized, by most NSP communities, as the traditional *Shura* in charge of managing the communal work (*Ashar*), but adapted to the modern world, the ballot concept and the intrusion of external actors, such as NGOs, and Kabul – a government which may actually provide benefit. But again, the divide remains between development and governance. Social issues are discussed and agreed upon outside of the CDC. In cases where the CDC expands its authority, it is often the pre-existing responsibility and authority of members executing their traditional duties through, and consolidating said responsibilities within, the CDC. Also, decades of conflict and years spent on a day-to-day struggle for subsistence, have hampered capacities, for long-term planning. Without external support – from NGOs or government – it is likely that the 2-year re-election cycle of CDCs will collapse.

Due to a lack of official institutionalization of CDCs, the definition and role of NSP in local governance remains unclear and, for now, can only be defined in relation to specific CDC / local circumstances, along with the unique personalities existing both inside and outside a particular community. NSP's current shortcomings are mostly the result of the changing expectations of the international donors, as well as, the lack of capacity of a central government unable – or unwilling? - to step in, and fully assert its authority in the borderlands. Although NSP was originally conceived to stabilize rural societies by reinforcing local governance, the perspective soon changed: with increasing numbers of sub-projects and parliamentary elections approaching, implementing rural infrastructure projects became the main NSP output. As the London Conference neared, NSP was more regarded, by donor governments, as a poverty reduction programme, rather than a local governance programme. NSP was also presented to donors as a pro-poor growth programme. Such differing perspectives influenced the types of reports to be generated, including criteria originally not envisaged in the organization of programme information (GTZ 2006:7). For instance, FP monitoring and assessment responsibilities to the Oversight Consultants are mostly based on the percentage of projects completed, and the amount of money spent (OC 2006:21). As such, three types of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are conducted: implementation monitoring (measuring progress against workplan); post-implementation monitoring (quality of the completed sub-project); and, programme evaluation (development outcomes, effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation). The M&E component has nothing to do with the governance aspect of NSP.

The need to present the donors, and the Afghan government, with quick and visible results, has turned NSP into a hardware-oriented programme, where the construction of small development projects has overshadowed the governance aspect (Sihlongonyane, M. F. 2001:40). It shows that NSP's different elements have been conceived, by actors not in agreement, as to what the final outcome and goals of NSP should be. Everyone is aware of the development aspect, which is well-defined. The governance aspect remains an empty canvas and jars of paint. It falls to the CDCs themselves, and the community beyond them, to decide the complexity of the image, and the colours. Lacking codification of the roles and responsibilities of the CDC into law, along with the general rules and precepts discussed in the NSP Operational Manual (January 2006), including set election and re-election schedules, gender equity, secret ballot, etc., and a further definition of the relationship between the community and the government at the district level, also codified into law, this is all that one can expect: the governance role of any given CDC will be shaped uniquely, and will be determined by strength.

Conclusion

Lacking the definition and codification of CDC roles, responsibilities, and obligations, into law, the successful CDC will bear the mantle of, and often, come to resemble, a traditional non-government *Shura*. It may take on duties according to the strength of personalities within the CDC. It is an exciting process, and while some CDCs will crumble, and others will succumb to corruption and traditional interests, still others will become what the donor and FP intend for them to be.

Once the programme is over, issues outside the scope envisioned by MRRD and the World Bank will arise, and, given the continuing status of Badakhshan (and other NSP provinces) as a periphery, where Kabul often holds little sway, it can be expected that such decisions may not fit to government norms. When will a particular CDC condemn alternative livelihoods? When will a rural infrastructure project, such as, an irrigation network, be used to irrigate a poppy field? When will a CDC, composed of traditional *Shura* members, weigh the fate of a woman accused of adultery?

Such considerations are not unrealistic; MRRD, the World Bank, and the Afghan government aim to replace traditional governance structures such as *Shuras* with the CDC. And *Shuras* can, and do, issue precisely these kinds of *Fatwas* and decrees. It is unrealistic to think that a CDC will not involve itself in such matters, absent clear definitions and support from the central government of what a CDC can, and cannot, do. The possibility of such future outcomes must be acknowledged.

Notes and References

1. ACTED is an NSP facilitating partner in 5 Afghan provinces, and has established CDCs in 1,495 villages (including year 3 activities now beginning in new districts of Badakhshan). Primary research was conducted in Badakhshan; ACTED conducted interviews in several villages where NSP has not yet been implemented, as well as NSP year-three villages where community mobilization was only beginning and no CDC election had yet occurred; other interviews were conducted with active CDCs in year 2 villages. Illustrative examples were also utilized from, and peripheral research was conducted among, ACTED CDCs in Kunduz, Faryab and Takhar provinces.

2. Amir Abdur Rahman laid the foundation, not only of the centralized and the modern Afghan state, but also of the alienation from the state of the religious, tribal and ethnic groups that dominate Afghan society (Ottaway & Lieven, 2002:2) The Communist party attempted to re-launch the state's modernizing programme, with some radical and authoritative methods. The growing distance between the urbanized and westernized elite, and the rest of the country, contributed to the failure of the Afghan constitutional monarchy in the 1960s and 1970s, and ultimately ended the state.

3. This group, primarily composed of Tâjiks, was nominally led by Burhannudin Rabbani, former president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The most powerful leader was Ahmad Shah Massoud, the commander of the Panjshir Valley. Both were Sunni Persian speakers but from different sub-regions and different bases of support (Rubin et al., 2001:20). Yet, unity in political affiliation did not preserve Badakhshan from violence. Fights between commanders, notably Bassir Khan and Najdmouddin, divided the province.

4. Commanders usually mobilize a clientele based on economic or religious basis. They also draw their legitimacy from their fighting abilities. Often, depending on men and weaponry, a commander can implement basic police and administration services. Their political power is localized; commanders who espouse loyalty to political parties unusually were not under the direct control of such a party, as groups such as Jamiat did not possess the infrastructure or capacity to centralize power fully. The power of one commander is thus personal, non-institutionalized and based on patron-clients relationships. No wonder then, that power in such areas becomes hereditary (Johnson et al, 2003:7)

5. Although the term *commander* is rife with negative implications – and not without reason – it must be noted that many commanders began their careers by simply defending their own communities. While some looked forward to the end of the fighting, others did not wish to relinquish the power they had gained during years of combat, and turned to illicit activities to maintain their positions.

6. Every interviewee asked about the process of governmental appointments in Badakhshan answered thusly. The perception of Kabul, whether it is true or not, is that it, and its representatives, is undermined by corruption allegation.

7. As from today, Badakhshan's current provincial governor is Monshi Abdul Mashid from Baghlan. It is alleged that he is receiving percentages from the raw opium trade. While these allegations are unverifiable, and likely result from the common belief that those in power must profit from such trades, such opinions reflect the defiance of the local population vis-à-vis sources of power not perceived as legitimate. The concept of *foreign-ness* applies to people not only outside of one's province, but in the case of Badakhshan, can imply those from outside of one's district, or even one's valley.

8. Most commanders in Badakhshan were Jamiat; a few were Hizb or Sayaf. Many affiliations were ones of convenience, and actual allegiance was fluid.

9. While militias have been officially demobilized, locals alleged that he could rapidly mobilize 300-400, men and has access to larger weapons.

10. Badakhshan is an almost entirely Tadjik and Jamiat-dominated area. Yet, in an area where political or factional alignments represent more of a name-brand than a coherent political ideology, competition between commanders has resulted in attempts by one faction or another to co-opt CDCs. This has also occurred in militia-contested areas of Faryab province.

11. Poppy eradication in Badakhshan is currently underway. In the first week of April 2006, national and provincial officials announced the start of the campaign immediately followed by violence in Jurm district. The UK government has set a target of 70 per cent reduction in poppy crops by 2008 and 100 per cent by 2013 (Pugh & Cooper, 2004:78).

12. Some scholars, building upon Foucault, analyze such reductions as control orientation in terms of a "discourse", attempting to expose development as an instrument of power and knowledge.

13. Another impediment, that assists in elite capture of CDCs, is the lack of payment for CDC members. A landowner has the leisure time to dedicate work to the CDC, and will not be confined by the lack of payment for such a duty; others do not have such leisurely schedules or options.

14. ACTED had to contend with a district leader in Faryab province, who assured his constituents that we would give away US$200 per family. Removing this preconception presented considerable problems in regard to implementation.

15. Subsequent research in Imam Sahib district, Kunduz province, confirmed the clear demarcation, between the CDC as a development tool, and the subsistence of the elders council, as a conflict-resolution assembly.

16. Relatives of the most powerful commander in Badakhshan had decided to appropriate some communal lands from to the school. They had obliged villagers to sign a paper, agreeing on them taking possession of the land, threatening them more or less directly. The husband of Meena, the deputy head of the CDC, had also signed the paper. When Meena heard about this issue, she cancelled the procedure and helped stop the transfer. "I represent the people, I have the authority to cancel the transfer".

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NOTE: Author's personal experiences of participating in various workshops, discussions, and debates are also reflected in the paper. For any further information or clarification author could be approached. Heinrich Böll Foundation, therefore, will not be in the position to respond.