



**LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LRRD)
IN AFGHANISTAN**

AGRICULTURE SECTOR REVIEW
IN AFGHANISTAN (2001-2006)



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During the discussions, numerous people and institutions expressed a great interest for the LRRD project and underlined their interest in conducting an institutional diagnosis of the water and irrigation sector. I hope that this report will fulfil some of their expectations. Thank you to the MAIL staff for their time and trust.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1 INTRODUCTION	11
1.1 A brief presentation of Groupe URD	11
1.2 A brief presentation of the LRRD program	12
1.3 Objectives and scope of this review	13
1.4 Methodology	13
1.5 Study limitations and constraints	13
2 TRENDS AND EVOLUTIONS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR.....	14
2.1 Pre-war and war periods.....	15
2.2 The civil war and the Taliban regime	16
2.3 2001-2003/4: from relief to development, where to draw the line?	18
2.4 2004-2007: the development paradigm	22
3 WHO IS WHO IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR?	25
3.1 A hazy definition of the mandate.....	25
3.2 Who are the main stakeholders?	27
3.3 JICA	30
3.4 FAO and the other UN agencies.....	30
3.5 NGO roles in the agricultural sector.....	34
4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	36
4.1 Improving knowledge.....	36
4.2 Tackling food insecurity	36
4.3 Defining a place for NGOs.....	38
4.4 How to link the development to the agro-business sector with food security issues? ...	39
4.5 Is the agenda needs-driven or donor-driven?	40
4.6 Early warning systems: insufficient political utilisation.....	40
4.7 Towards a shared and inclusive development	40
4.8 Building capacity and increasing links.....	41
4.9 Supporting quality M&E systems	41
Annex 1: Presentation of the main FAO programs in Afghanistan.....	43
Annex 2: Bibliography.....	47
Annex 3: List of documents produced by the LRRD project in Afghanistan.....	48

Abbreviations and acronyms

AAD	Afghan Aid
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIMS	Afghan Information Management Service
AKDN	Agha Khan development Network
ANDS	Afghan National development strategy
AREU	Afghanistan Research Information and Evaluation Unit
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
CDC	Community Development Council
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan refugees
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc.
EC	European Commission
EIRP	Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFW	Food For Work
FP	Facilitating Partner
GAA	German Agro Action
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
ha	Hectare = 5 <i>jerib</i>
HQ	Headquarters
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IP	Implementing Partner
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LRRD	Link Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
MAAHF	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and Food
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, irrigation and livestock
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MIS	Management Information System
MIWRE	Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources, and Environment
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MWP	Ministry of Water and Power (former Ministry)
NDF	National Development Framework
NEEP	National Emergency Employment Programme
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RAMP	Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Programme
TA	Technical assistance
TAPA	Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan
TCEO	FAO's Technical Emergency Operation Division
TCI	FAO's Investment Centre Division
TGA	Transitional Government of Afghanistan
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Programme

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations for Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Around 85% of the Afghan population lives in rural areas. Agriculture and livestock raising are of great importance to the Afghan economy and to Afghan livelihoods in general. In the 1970s, Afghanistan was practically self-sufficient in food and at the same time exported agricultural produce. During the 25 years of war, much of the rural infrastructure and means of production collapsed. Opium production has tripled since 2003 and the country currently accounts for 87% of the global opium production.

The issues related to agriculture in Afghanistan are complex as they involve technical, economic, risk management, social, power relations, land and water issues and diversified political agendas. Constraints, needs and opportunities vary significantly throughout the country, making the design of quick and simple policies more complicated.

During the 25 years of war, the degradation of state-related functions, including health, education, economic services as well as law and order mechanisms which has been aggravated by widespread destruction due to the long lasting conflicts have led to economic isolation, deprivation of access to production areas and agri-inputs, and lack of exposure to the new types of technical innovations and practices. Economic activities have also been badly affected, creating crises of purchasing power, production capacities and access to credit that directly threaten household food security. Yet, a remarkable resilience and an incredible capacity to adapt and adjust have proved to be key to not only the mere survival of rural families but also interesting entry points for future rehabilitation and development efforts.

This document presents an analysis of the theoretical as well as operational and methodological challenges currently facing the aid community in Afghanistan working in the agricultural sector.

Defining policies and rationalisation within the ministry

From 1979 to 2001, stakeholders targeted food security issues in a limited manner through emergency, rehabilitation and almost development-style projects. The considerable efforts undertaken by NGOs and UN agencies (the latter since 1986 and the launch of the Salaam operation) during the conflict period have had a positive impact in certain regions. Improved seed programmes, extension activities, animal health projects, and so forth have strengthened farmers' coping mechanisms. Looking beyond economic factors, it is important to underline the socio-political impact that these programmes have had. The activities carried out by NGOs during the conflict period and, even to this day, have provided invaluable support for the population. They have won the trust of local communities, giving them a significant advantage over other stakeholders.

Since 2001, the new role of the state apparatus and the influence of donors have changed the rules of the game. Seed control procedures have been established and a seed law has been designed by the MAIL (assisted by FAO). The research system with its pilot farmer network has also developed considerably. Today, NGOs and the FAO are working actively towards setting up or strengthening the private seed market.

In 2002, the capacity of the Ministry responsible for agricultural affairs was extremely limited and its ability to deliver viable and reliable services to farmers dramatically reduced¹. The

¹ During the years of war, access to training for the ministry's staff were very limited and even if it was accessible, approaches, systems and methodologies were long been out dated.

ministry has changed its name a number of times² and this is symbolic the difficulties it has encountered in defining its mandate, objectives, role and responsibilities. From 2002 onwards, organisation within the ministry has improved a lot. Thanks to the PRR process³, capacity development efforts are now underway, a Master Plan⁴ has been designed in order to define the strategic priorities for the coming years and the ministries have defined seven pillars⁵. Duties and responsibilities are now clearer. Moreover coordination between the different aid stakeholders and the Department of Agriculture has improved considerably.⁶

Programmes related to food security often focused on increasing cereal yields. Thus, for many years, improved wheat seed programmes have been a central tenet of development programmes. A total of 10,000 tons of improved variety seed⁷ are currently being produced in the country each year. However although wheat⁸ is an important crop for the Afghan population, different stakeholders have underlined that attaining self sufficiency in wheat should not be the “only priority”. Even if wheat is the core food in the Afghan diet, it is certainly not a crop that will provide economic security to all Afghan farming systems in the long term.

Changing roles in the donor community...

Since 2002, the EC AIDCO Delegation in Kabul has been one of the main donors for food security programme whereas ECHO was in charge of emergency relief (food aid, shelter). Today, AIDCO has decreased its funds allocated to “pure food security programme” and from 2007 ECHO might become, through its support to food aid and emergency agricultural rehabilitation programmes, the main EC Directorate dealing with food insecurity.

In order to support both the diversification of agricultural production and to boost the development of the private sector, the World Bank and the EC have oriented their strategies towards the more remunerative sectors of perennial horticulture and livestock.

In the meantime, large programme funded by USAID such as RAMP, have injected massive financial and human resources in the sector. A superficial review of a few of them raises questions over the quality of the sector analysis on which they are based and the strong ideological views they tend to impose on a still fragile rural economy.

Learning from the field to define policies

The last two years of research have clearly shown that there is a widespread lack of understanding of Afghan agro-systems. As the agro systems in Afghanistan are highly diversified, farmers’ strategies and coping mechanisms differ from one part of the country to

² MAL (Ministry of agriculture and Livestock from 2002-2004) MAAH (Ministry of Agriculture and Animal husbandry from 2004-2005), MAAHF (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and food from 2004-2006), MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in 2006) and finally MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (2006-?))

³ The PRR process aims at reducing the number of MAIL’s employees from 12,000 to 6,000 and raising staff salaries.

⁴ Master Plan for Agriculture, prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and Food (MAAHF) and numerous consultants, was launched in November 2005 and is composed of two sectors: livestock and the development of high-value horticulture for export. It also highlights the importance of addressing food security issues and prioritizes environmental issues such as reforestation, rangeland management and watershed management.

⁵ Food security, Horticulture, livestock, natural resources, infrastructure and irrigation, reforms for markets, human capacities.

⁶ A donor’s meeting **involved** in the agricultural sector takes place on a monthly basis

⁷ Accounting for about 5% of total seed requirements

⁸ Wheat is the main cereal and staple food and accounts for 70% of the total cultivated field crops.

another. The fact that that climatic risks⁹, as well as other kinds of hazards, weigh significantly on farming systems, farmers often orient their farming strategies towards risk reduction whilst maintaining sufficient flexibility to develop coping mechanisms. These strategies need to be taken into account in programme design. In this area, some NGOs have key expertise and capacity which government institutions are lacking, so links need to be improved. Policies and strategies developed at the national level need to be reviewed at the provincial level and adapted to the local context. We can underline the efforts made by some stakeholders to get a better understanding of the Afghan farming systems (Groupe URD and AREU studies) and to take into account this diversity in designing the programmes at the field level (the NFSP: national food security programme planned by MAIL/FAO).

Fighting food insecurity and dealing with emergency without hampering the development process?

For decades, the development of the agricultural sector in Afghanistan has been mainly associated with emergency relief and rural rehabilitation programmes. The Master Plan for the agricultural sector set food security as one of the main objectives for the coming years. Since 2005, the main goal was to move away from relief and rehabilitation approaches to launch the development of the private sector. Yet, after five years of massive aid intervention in Afghanistan, food security remains a challenge for the development of Afghanistan. The last results of the 2005 NRVA show that more than 42% of the Afghan population suffers from a poor diet diversity. Agro-ecological vulnerabilities are regularly reminded to all actors by recurring droughts, devastating floods. Prevailing military confrontations in the large rural southern and eastern band of the country are dramatically affecting the recovery of the rural economy and facilitate the dissemination of poppy production and its related set of illegal activities. In fact, many Afghan households still suffer from chronic food insecurity and will continue to rely on food aid until longer-term social security and safety nets are established.

People living in mountainous areas where the winter season lasts for more than six months are partially food insecure. In Ghor, Samangan, in certain districts of Bamiyan province and in Nuristan, many families face food shortages (in terms of quality and quantity). Even though food security is no longer a nationwide problem, some Afghan families still have to cope with food shortages every year, and a great number of them will continue to do so in the case of severe droughts or flooding. The different types of food-related issues in Afghanistan should be better analysed. Chronic malnutrition (mountainous areas) requires rehabilitation-type of work and long-term development programmes where food security objectives remain of the utmost importance, temporary drought affected areas (such as northern Afghanistan in 2006) may benefit from well targeted food aid when needed whereas, the development of areas affected by long-term droughts (southern Afghanistan) may benefit from innovative programmes (water harvesting, diversification, etc.). Whereas some stakeholders have decided to move on from food security programs to invest their efforts and resources into the development of the private sector (agro-business), relief interventions are still needed in many parts of the country with the risk that this may in some way hamper development process.

Food aid is still subject to vast debate in Afghanistan in relation to its relevance and its modalities. In certain circumstances, where it may be relevant for the aid community to engage in free seed distribution, such as drought, flooding just after sowing, locusts or other pests, or in some parts of the country, such as remote and mountainous areas, it is important that these operations are well prepared and beneficiaries are targeted carefully. In the case of an emergency such as the 2006 drought, free seeds distribution may occur, however one should make sure that irrigation water is available and the targeting should be done properly to ensure that the most vulnerable are being targeted.

⁹ In Afghanistan, crop yields and livestock production fluctuate each year in relation to the severity and duration of droughts which range from mild to severe.

Distribution programmes of seeds and agricultural tools should be discouraged since it seriously handicaps the prospects of effective demand-driven services, which is, in theory, the overall objective of the MAIL.

Recommendations

The emergence of the private sector, which has the backing of the international community, is an important step towards the development of a modern and competitive agricultural sector. Nevertheless, there are still many vulnerable groups in Afghanistan and Afghan farmers continue to face considerable risks (agro-climatic, political and economic). There are links to be made between the development of the private sector and the progressive inclusion of vulnerable people. The MAIL and the IC should put all their efforts in ensuring that certain areas or groups of people are not being overlooked by the “development processes”.

Fair and efficient management of agricultural means of production (mainly land and water) within the country is an essential condition for peace, security and stability. A better mobilisation and use of available water resources based on longer term environmental and social considerations is a priority for the recovery and development of Afghanistan.

Current development trends in Afghanistan imply that NGOs and the humanitarian sector as a whole need to find their place, to review their role and limit the scope of their interventions. The growth of the private sector means that NGOs must now concentrate on specific roles and clarify their scope of interventions. NGOs should concentrate on services that cannot currently be delivered by the private sector. They should focus on the most vulnerable people because until the private sector is established throughout the country, the poorest do not stand to gain any benefits. Now that the role and responsibilities of the MAIL, the private sector and the NGOs have been clarified, the different stakeholders should work together and learn from each other on a regular basis. NGOs still have a major role to play in Afghanistan as the only stakeholder whose commitment focuses on the most vulnerable populations. Advocacy and lobbying should definitely be one of their prerogatives.

ECHO is currently putting significant efforts into building a food security strategy in order to improve the links between relief interventions, rehabilitation and development programmes. The European commission should remain involved in food security programs and strengthen the links with ECHO to address food security issue in a broader scope.

In all cases, food aid programmes, inputs distribution projects, crop diversification activities should be based on a thorough assessment (diagnosis) and followed by an in-depth ex-post evaluation in order to ensure that impacts are appraised and lessons learnt.

1 Introduction

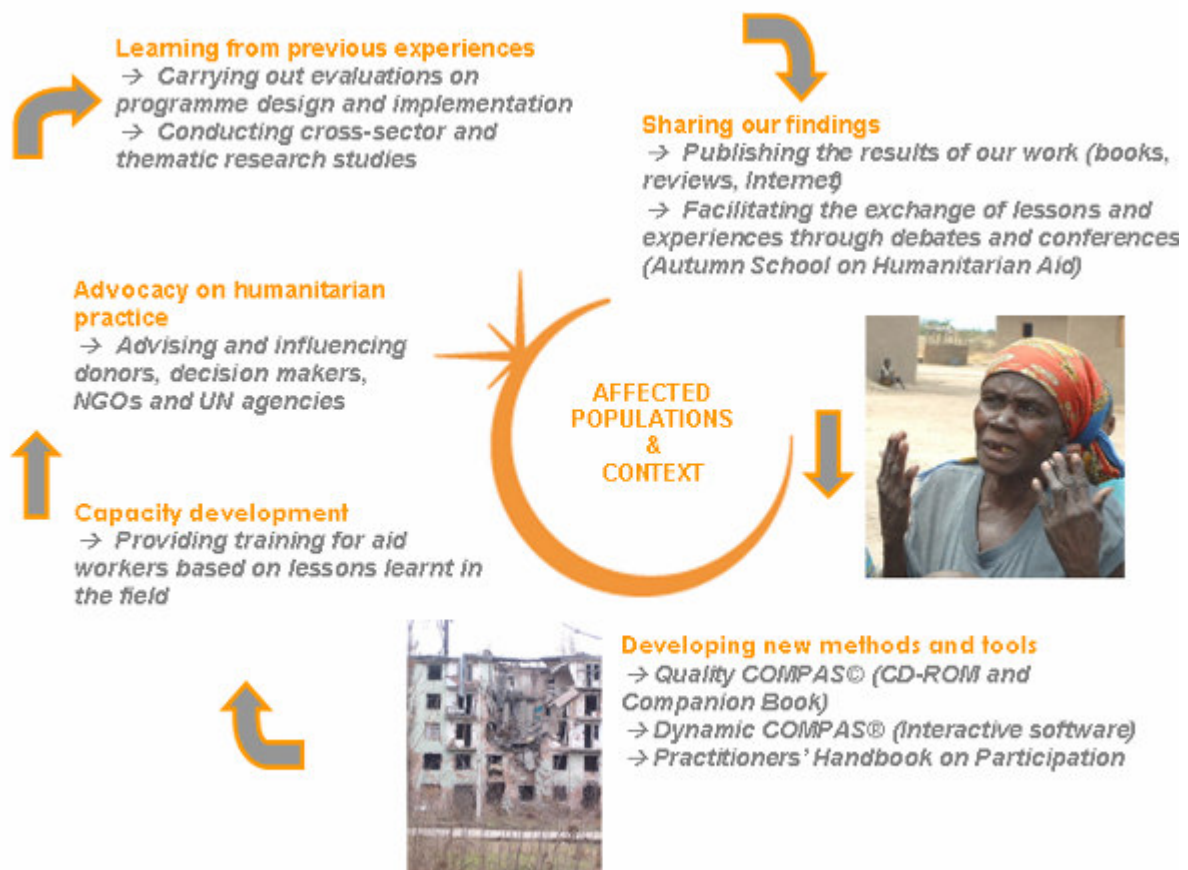
1.1 A brief presentation of Groupe URD

Groupe URD is a French research institute whose main goal is to: **improve quality of humanitarian practices through debate, research, evaluation, capacity building, training and lobbying**. Groupe URD's members include numerous development and emergency relief actors, academics and training institutions.

Groupe URD's main activities are evaluation, research and training, in line with the collective learning cycle (see below).

International solidarity organisations are now fully aware of the dual responsibility they have to affected populations and donors in ensuring quality in their interventions. Groupe URD operates a collective learning cycle, which provides support for aid agencies engaged in this quality assurance exercise. The overall objective of these activities is to ensure continuous improvement of the aid delivered to affected populations.

Figure 1: Groupe URD's collective learning cycle



1.2 A brief presentation of the LRRD program

One of Groupe URD's main programmes in Afghanistan is the two-year EC funded "Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development" programme. The objective of this programme is to draw lessons from current experience to inform policies and programmes for NGOs, donors, international agencies and governmental institutions.

The LRRD programme focuses on six sectors:

- Urban Development
- Water / Irrigation
- Agriculture
- Nutrition
- Health
- Education

The programme has three main components:

1) Learning and sharing lessons through iterative multi-sector reviews. This component includes: (i) an in-depth review for each sector, which are currently under completion; (ii) a multi sector report, based on a three-week multi sector field review in April 2006; and (iii) this multi sector report is the conclusion of the sector based and cross sector reviews conducted over the past two years.

The process of "learning and sharing lessons" commenced with field visits conducted for the Quality Project (funded by ECHO, the French Government and Swiss Development Committee). In July-August 2002, January-February 2003 and August 2003, a group of consultants from Groupe URD came to Afghanistan to conduct multi-sector reviews in the aforementioned sectors, except for the water sector which was introduced in 2005 and the education sector which was introduced in 2006. These field missions enabled Groupe URD to closely monitor the evolution of the aid sector in Afghanistan and improve its understanding of current trends taking place within the humanitarian aid system.

2) Increasing knowledge and experience by carrying out applied research in urban and rural settings in specific fields (including food and economic security).

Applied research usually focuses on key issues identified during the learning and sharing lessons process. Junior experts from Groupe URD conducted five-month research in Afghanistan on:

- Four different agrarian systems in Afghanistan;
- One small city, Bamiyan; one middle-sized city, Jalalabad; and one large city, Kabul.

These studies provided Groupe URD with a good picture of Afghanistan's urban and rural sectors. They were carried out in partnership with NGOs who had shown interest in incorporating applied research into their programmes from the outset.

3) Contributing to the capacity building efforts of relevant ministries and national NGOs through training on farming diagnosis methods and quality assurance.

The main findings of our research have been regularly presented in workshops and conferences. In this way, Groupe URD hopes to share and discuss the information collected with the widest range of stakeholders possible. Training sessions on M&E and quality approaches have been delivered to afghan NGOs.

Several reports and articles have been produced. The can be downloaded on Groupe URD's website. A full list is given in the annexe.

1.3 Objectives and scope of this review

A sector review has been undertaken for the five sectors quoted above in addition to the rural development / agriculture sector. This sector review of the agriculture sector aims to:

- Analyse how the institutional set-up has evolved over the last decades, focusing on the main changes, issues and challenges since 2001;
- Review and analyse past and current stakeholders, programmes and strategies;
- Study more specifically the relationship between NGOs, UN agencies and the government;
- Finally, the analysis and synthesis undertaken in this study aims at giving a global view of the actual institutional set up in the agriculture sector and of the main issues to tackle. This should serve decision makers and operators in their planning processes.

1.4 Methodology

The study was mostly carried out thanks to various interviews with people from various institutions at both central and provincial/regional levels. This was also based on the experience of working in partnership with some NGOs.

Interviews were conducted with some of the stakeholders involved in the rural sector including ministries and government institutions, donors, implementing agencies (UN and private consulting firms), independent consultants, NGOs, etc. A number of interviews were held at the MAIL since many stakeholders have their offices there.

Another important part of the research was the review and analysis of various written reports and documents, collected from the numerous interlocutors met.

1.5 Study limitations and constraints

This study should not be seen as an exhaustive analysis of the agriculture sector but rather as a tool to guide the various stakeholders involved in this very broad sector. The analysis and assessment parts of this report are comprised of the author's own observations and points of view, although most of them have been shared with some of the interlocutors.

Some of the constraints include:

- Multiplicity of (past and current) stakeholders and programmes;
- Difficulty in meeting some people and obtaining information. Some stakeholders were quite reluctant to share their information or present their programs or ideas.
- Lack of data regarding the evolution of agricultural policies and institutional set up (especially before 2001).

2 Trends and evolutions in the agricultural sector

As stated in the master plan: *“agriculture dominates the Afghan economy and society.”* Agriculture is indeed the backbone of the Afghan economy and the prime source of livelihood for more than two-third of the overall population.

According to the NRVA report in 2003¹⁰, *“Insufficient agricultural and fertile land, water, inability to expand cash crop production, no alternate source of income (...) have prevented the majority of people from being able to improve their livelihood. Years of conflicts and drought have had a huge impact on the average household’s ability to acquire and maintain assets as well as their ability to manage the adverse effects of repeated shocks to their livelihoods.”*

Afghanistan has been severely affected by nearly 25 years of war. The collapse of infrastructure and markets had dramatic consequences on rural life and traditional rights, rules and regulation systems, formerly governing land and water management issues. Three years of drought (1999-2001) led to the disruption of farming systems and animal husbandry systems and forced people to sell off their assets. Improved mobilisation of available means of production together with long-term environmental and social considerations are some of the important challenges facing all stakeholders involved in Afghan rural recovery and development. This is necessarily linked to both policy and programmes development.

As two thirds of the Afghan population rely mainly on agriculture, rural development/ agriculture is an issue of utmost importance. Land and water, farmers’ main means of production have been a source of internal or external tension and conflict between neighbouring countries and communities. In Afghanistan, the last 25 years of war and conflict, in addition to a series of droughts, have increased the level of inequality and conflict within different villages, districts and provinces throughout the country as a whole. This *vision of a peaceful and prosperous future* outlined in the National Development Framework relies predominantly on a fair and efficient management of the natural resources between farmers and neighbouring countries. Since 2001, the new Afghan government and institutions, with the help of international agencies and consultants, have made considerable advances. The following part of this report provides a summary of the main outputs and consequences.

During the 25 years of war, the degradation of state-related functions, including health, education, economic services as well as law and order mechanisms which has been aggravated by widespread destruction due to the long lasting conflicts have led to economic isolation, deprivation of access to production areas and agri-inputs, and lack of exposure to the new types of technical innovations and practices. Economic activities have also been badly affected, creating crises of purchasing power, production capacities and access to credit that directly threaten household food security. Yet, a remarkable resilience and an incredible capacity to adapt and adjust have proved to be key to not only the mere survival of rural families but also interesting entry points for future rehabilitation and development efforts.

Crises and food insecurity in Afghanistan have a long shared history with roots in both natural factors (existing resource base and the risk of climatic vagaries), human determinants (type of exploitation of the resource base and competition between groups) and the political context (war, different roles of the state). As far as we trace back, thanks to ancient documentation sources, stories of drought, floods and famine seem to have formed part of Afghanistan’s rural heritage.

¹⁰ NRVA, 2003, p7

The following section aims to provide an overview of the various steps and events that have marked the agricultural sector in the last decades.

2.1 Pre-war and war periods

2.1.1 Popularisation / extension towards a green revolution

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Kingdom of Afghanistan was one of the favourite targets of many western countries. Its vicinity to the eastern side of the Soviet Union and its position as a “buffer state” between the communist bloc, Western influence (Iran was still considered as part of that era of influence) and the large Indian power (prior to the partition of India) meant that it was often targeted for aid and development assistance. The USAID budget for Afghanistan for instance was relatively large compared to the size of the country. Important irrigation programmes, for instance the Helmand dam and irrigation network, are inherited from this period. From 1973 to 1978 the country fell under socialist influence. The attempt to modify the means of production and social relations in the countryside encountered a strong resistance in rural areas and young students and activists who went to work in the villages were often met with gunshots. The social system in the countryside was not ready for change and the voluntarist approach adopted by the state eventually triggered a massive insurgency in rural areas, which was immediately supported by part of the intellectual elite and by the religious apparatus. This rural upheaval can be seen to have prompted the Soviet invasion. However, in the late 1970s, Afghanistan had almost reached self-sufficiency (at the national level, not at the household level) importing only 2,500 tons of cereal, thanks to research and extension programmes that developed and promoted high-yielding, disease-resistant varieties of cereals.

As a result of the strong influence of the Soviet system, the institutions created for managing the agricultural sector were mainly based on the myth of the great socialist agricultural revolution and focused on technical aspects. The extension department was well developed and most of the agronomists trained during this period in Afghanistan or in communist countries were often specialised in engineering aspects. There were nineteen agricultural research stations in the different agro climatic zones of the country and the extension department disseminated results to farmers through demonstration plots.

Farming practices, decision-making processes and farmers’ knowledge were not highly considered and were undervalued. The dominant point of view was that farmers should be taught how to run their farming systems through popularisation and extension. Many agronomists and agricultural engineers were trained in the cities and many were from urban extraction rather than rural communities. They were sent throughout the country to “improve farmer’s practices and know-how”.

The communist period based on state-run farms and large-scale mechanisation schemes has had a limited impact on rural life. Yet it is still sometimes frames the way policies are thought about and designed. This situation continues to impact the overall agricultural sector.

2.1.2 The initial phase of international assistance in agriculture

During the war against the Red Army, assistance programmes in the agricultural sector began discreetly. The war context limited considerably the impact of the aid. Most of the aid was distribution of food and non-food assets and the medical sector was by large the most developed sector at that time, although small-scale agricultural programmes were also initiated at this time. AMI, Solidarités, ACF, Afrane, Afghan Aid, Madera, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, etc., started their activities during this period. Aid in agriculture and livestock really took off at a later stage, when the first premises of negotiations became visible and the

Salaam Operation was launched. As the influence of the state was only limited to the areas under military control, the commanders became the main power holders: they were in charge of the police, security and food supply to the populations in the area under their control. In most cases, the local commanders rapidly understood the importance of controlling aid assistance to increase their power. In order to be able to carry out their day-to-day work, NGOs often developed close links with the local commanders. To be able to access some parts of the country or certain communities, NGOs could not remain neutral and chose their side. Some of them, such as Madera or Solidarités, are still well known for their engagement to the resistance movement. The visibility of aid was a huge stake already.

2.2 The civil war and the Taliban regime

2.2.1 Food security at the core of the agenda

After the Geneva Agreements and the departure of Soviet troops in 1988-89, food security became a topic of great importance. Budgets began to increase, as the economic conditions required for the return of four million Afghan refugees had to put in place since they now represented a burden for Iran and Pakistan seeing that the reason for their exile had theoretically disappeared.

During the civil war (1992-96), programmes were numerous in the agricultural sector, covering a wide range of interventions. During this period, a handful of UN agencies (OCHA and UN-HABITAT), the ICRC and NGOs were the main humanitarian stakeholders as Afghanistan was still in turmoil.

- A few international NGOs, some of them (Madera, ACF, Solidarités, Oxfam, etc.) had offices in Afghanistan, while others were implementing programmes from Peshawar and within the refugees camps in Pakistan. National NGOs were often subcontracted by international NGOs or the UN. Marginalised communities, such as the Hazara¹¹ ethnic group and vulnerable populations in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps were favoured by NGOs.
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was a forerunner in many fields of emergency agricultural rehabilitation.
- United Nations agencies, in particular the UNDP and FAO, the latter in fact being mainly an implementation agency for the PEACE programme's agricultural component, as well as the UNPICD, were present dealing with all aspects linked to the eradication of opium production.

Different UN agencies were involved in the rehabilitation of rural infrastructure and food and inputs distribution. The UN-funding mechanism was at the time being operated via UNDP. UNOPS, through the Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation Programme (ARRP) and FAO, were markedly the most active. FAO (from Peshawar) was concentrating on inputs distribution and UNDCP, WFP, UNHCR, were involved in the rehabilitation of rural infrastructure (mainly canals and karez). At this time, the prevailing humanitarian concept within the UN agencies was the Quick Impact Project (QIP). In many cases, NGOs were subcontracted as implementing partners of UN agencies. NGOs started implementing different types of agricultural projects: horticulture, cereal production, irrigation, animal health, mechanisation.

The Taliban period was disrupted by the difficult relationship between the Taliban regime and the humanitarian community, with occasional withdrawals by UN and NGO staff from the field. Aid interventions were highly handicapped by the political context. The limitations in operational capacity and security challenges severely constrained geographical coverage, especially in the Southern Region. During this period, the main donor supporting these

¹¹ The French NGO Solidarités received funds to work in Hazarjat, as the Hazara community was clearly targeted by the Taliban regime.

activities was the European Union, with its aid programme for displaced persons and ECHO-run emergency relief.

2.2.2 Attaining food security?

During the war, relief, rehabilitation and development projects were funded through the framework of food security and implemented by NGOs. They focused on food production and food/income diversification to improve people's nutritional and economic status. For instance, AAD (Afghan Aid) implemented various kinds of agricultural/livestock project through a community mobilisation approach.¹²

Many types and modalities of programmes (emergency, rehabilitation and development) were concomitant and implemented by the same stakeholders: seeds and tools distribution, support programmes for rehabilitation of irrigation facilities via the injection of FFW process, complex agricultural rehabilitation programmes related to refugee return programmes and development-style interventions including animal health programmes and kitchen gardens.

During the war, different factors, such as low yields and asset depletion, seriously weakened farming systems, impoverishing families and driving the majority into high levels of debt. In response, NGOs set up several emergency programmes in order to increase food security and strengthen people's ability to cope. Despite the fact that several NGOs had already adopted a more comprehensive approach of rural development, most of them focused on agricultural activities, such as improving yields by distributing improved varieties of seeds (mainly irrigated varieties) and rehabilitation of irrigation canals and karez¹³ to increase water availability, as well as extension and popularisation.

This period was also marked by an unbalanced geographical distribution of assistance due to the difficulties in accessing many parts of the country where war or severe insecurity prevailed.

Three rather different types of agricultural programmes coexisted within the aid community in Afghanistan in the sector of food security:

- Increase the yield per surface unit by intensifying the use of input /improved varieties on surfaces that can be irrigated (based on seed and fertilizer distribution, demonstration plots and multiplication, extension work). This programme was the logical follow up of programmes implemented prior to the war.
- Extend the agricultural land for intensification by developing new irrigated areas (canals /kareze rehabilitation or reconstruction). Risk reduction would then facilitate the acceptance of the comprehensive technical package presented above.
- Animal health programmes: some NGOs, for instance Madera in Jalalabad, had a livestock component within their food security programmes. From 1997 to 2001¹⁴, Madera had the only vaccination production centre in Afghanistan. The vaccines produced in this centre were used for the animal health programmes implemented by Madera, as well as by the ICRC and other vaccination programmes implemented by NGOs.

Alongside these three types of programmes, some NGOs developed small projects to improve food security and diversify food consumption. For instance, AAD implemented kitchen garden programmes, fruit tree demonstration plots and fruit processing in Badakshan.

¹² AAD was the first NGO to develop the community mobilisation approach in 1997.

¹³ Karez is the Pashto term for the man-made underground water system.

¹⁴ In 2001, the centre was completely destroyed by a Taliban assault.

2.2.3 A shaky institutional framework

The civil war and the Taliban regime made it difficult to obtain a holistic vision of the context and its evolution. In addition, donors and NGOs were working on two different agendas. NGO strategies were based on community needs and in some cases on NGO visibility issues, while donor strategies were also driven by the political agendas which continually evolved from 1992 to 2001. During this period, the Afghan authorities were in a shaky situation.

- From 1992 to 1996, the capacity of ministries in charge of the rural sector was very weak and they often did not have access to the field beyond Kabul plain;
- From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban had no real, effective ministry of agriculture and there was an international embargo on development aid to the Taliban government.

2.3 2001-2003/4: from relief to development, where to draw the line?

Right after the fall of the Taliban and the ensuing stabilisation of the situation in Kabul, many new aid actors and NGOs launched different kinds of projects in Afghanistan. They ensured a boost in the relief component of the response and many free distributions took place at that time (improved wheat seeds, vegetable seeds, agricultural tools, fertilizers and livestock).

Simultaneously, donors injected large amounts of money into massive rehabilitation. The intention of introducing a wider range of interventions and assisting more people is all too apparent in the programme design.

During the transition phase from an emergency situation, due to the drought, Taliban restrictions and war, to a development phase, we can distinguish two different axes of intervention: (i) activities aimed at improving food security, i.e. traditional agricultural programmes; and (ii) activities aimed at improving people's capacity to cope and diversification. This approach can be classified as belonging to the 'umbrella' of new ideas linked to the livelihood approach. However, many different NGOs and agencies implemented 'food-for-work' programmes for roads, bridges, flood control and building of infrastructure. WFP played a very important role in the distribution of food items.

2.3.1 The rush of the aid actors

After the events of September 2001, Afghanistan became a high profile crisis characterised by huge media attention and an increase in funding availability. After the fall of the Taliban regime and three years of drought, the agricultural sector was facing huge difficulties. As NGOs, donors and UN agencies rushed to Afghanistan, a thorough analysis of the institutional development work that had been undertaken up until 2001 was not carried out. Institutional memory regarding the war period remains in the hands of a few people and written material covering this period is scarce and underexploited.

A large range of new programmes was launched in several directions with relief, rehabilitation and development objectives. A whole new generation of NGOs and staff were mobilised in the sector of food security and agriculture, with often a very limited knowledge of the context and the field.

The main priority was to make sure that refugees or IDPs returning from exile would be able to resettle and to help farmers to recover from both the war and the consequences of the drought. The line B320, the so-called "aid to displaced populations", had a certain number of clear aims of strengthening host communities' capacity of absorption and the setting up of short-term agricultural assistance for returnees (seeds and tool kits) and mid-term assistance to support the integration process.

- After 2001, pressure and/or high expectations from donors and communities persuaded some NGOs to expand the surface area of irrigated land. The extension of primary canals, creation of surface irrigation schemes, diverting water from rivers, and development of groundwater irrigation with the construction of wells equipped with motor pumps, drainage of wet and barren zones unfit for agriculture took place.
- The overall results and outputs vary according to the programme and the implementing NGO. In many cases, the ex-ante evaluations did not sufficiently take into consideration technical specificities and requirements, as well as socio-economic and environmental conditions and long-term effects.

The objective of many aid programmes at this time was also to ensure a longer-term building up of assets of rural economies and activities to help prevent secondary migration and displacement, as well as long-term recapitalisation strategies of rural economies. We can also stress the existence of small-scale agronomy research programmes to intensify the production. In the meantime, the programmes supported by ECHO were rather basic assistance in the form of 'seed and tool' programmes but also 'food-for-work' schemes.

2.3.2 Broadening the scope of thinking?

In 2003, many NGOs moved from Peshawar to Kabul and carried out field studies to get a better understanding of farmers' strategies and needs. The idea that rural development requires a broader focus than agriculture activities alone became more widespread amongst NGOs. The livelihood concept aiming at improving the understanding of rural economy, was launched by different experts (Adam Pain) and research centres, such as AREU (Afghan research and Evaluation Unit). In view of the characteristics of the Afghan context, the predominant agricultural approach undertaken previously has progressively been transformed into a more global 'livelihood approach', increasing opportunities for off-farm activities in order to improve food security and strengthening people's capacity to cope. This global approach has proved to be key in facilitating reintegration and preventing a new exodus. The awareness that there was an urgent need for a broader focus in rural society increased considerably and some NGOs, such as DACAAR, altered their approach and programme design. At the same time, donors released funds for development programmes based on a longer-term approach. In the DACAAR programme description for 2005-2007, the shift from Integrated Agricultural Development (IAD) to the Rural Development Programme (RDP), which occurred within the second consortium, is presented as a new direction for the programme. From 2003, Afghanaid began to develop non-agricultural activities such as income-generating projects for women (e.g. vocational training for small businesses such as bee keeping / kitchen gardens). Regarding the technical content of the projects, there were more or less the same as those implemented during the war and the Taliban regime (described above).

2.3.3 Quantity versus quality? Quick impact versus sustainability?

Almost all the reports that were written at this time highlight the lack of analysis and coordination of aid and there was no integrated needs assessment or prioritisation. NGOs often refer to the severity of people's needs to justify their presence in an area but in most cases they experienced many difficulties in assessing and responding to people's needs in the most remote areas. Existing documentation at NGO level contains very little information on the way assessments were undertaken. This lack of real needs assessment was quite often justified by the fact that considerable needs had to be addressed and that economy was so disrupted that everyone everywhere was in need. As a result, interventions, often based on assumed needs may underestimate the complex range of interacting needs, demands and expectations of populations, donors, NGOs and the political agenda. This lack of needs assessment could also be explained by the fact that due to the huge funding opportunities offered to NGOs, some agencies bypassed needs assessment and were looking for projects on which to spend this readily available money.

The “rehabilitation” approach, understood as the reconstruction of institutions or infrastructure existing before the crisis, quickly showed its limits when the so-called institutions or infrastructure had already proven their inadequacy. The same is true for some major projects of the past (giant irrigation programmes) or farming systems or functions that were set up under the influence of the USSR before 1979 (large cotton projects) or during the Soviet period (cooperatives, mechanisation department). Few lessons learned were then injected back into programme design. What kind of feasibility studies are available to aid workers before making their decisions? How can pre-crisis development errors foster reflection about activities undertaken during and after the crisis?

Linking this type of indispensable knowledge, skills and a proper understanding of farmers’ constraints and decision-making processes is still rare in Afghanistan. On the one hand, there have been emergency farming programmes based essentially on logistics capacity (means of available transport) and, in fact, poorly designed in terms of technical content. Some major seed programmes, which favoured tonnage over adequacy, are part of this deviation. The design of these emergency programmes would have benefited significantly from a more thorough development analysis. There have also been worthwhile development farming programmes that were unable to hike up the scale of their intervention, in view of the magnitude of relief needs.

In such a context, the needs assessment phase was challenged by pressures to increase population coverage rapidly and was not on the agenda. Quantity was given the priority over quality. In addition, the short project cycle and short-term funding mechanisms encouraged NGOs to identify projects that could deliver quick visible outputs/impacts. Competition to “fly agency flags” prevailed over long-term objectives calling into question NGO accountability. Many aid workers complained of disruptions to their projects when NGOs without prior experience in the country rushed in without taking into account ongoing activities. To a certain extent, this generated misunderstandings between NGOs in the field, as well as misunderstandings between NGOs and the population. In general, poor coordination and a high disparity in the quality of the individual interventions of the numerous NGOs intensified. Moreover, some agencies began to attract long-term salaried employees from both local and international NGOs by doubling or tripling traditional salaries, causing a loss of institutional memory and a generalised wage inflation.

2.3.4 Aid mechanisms

Basic mechanisms of humanitarian interventions in place before 2001 have remained the same: individual projects or interventions directly or indirectly (through some UN agencies) implemented by the myriad of NGOs. This period also saw the emergence of new forms of aid and funding mechanisms, such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). Many bilateral and multilateral organisations joined the ARTF in order to assist the Afghan government. The ARTF encompassed large, mostly multi purpose/non focal (non sector based), and government-led programmes. In rural areas, the ARTF aims to help the reconstruction of villages (health, water, education, etc.), infrastructure, the recovery of the rural economy and the building or strengthening of village institutions. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) launched in 2003 is one pillar of the ARTF intervention. The MRRD¹⁵ who was in charge of the NSP benefited from abundant funds.

2.3.5 From NGO leadership to state building

For many decades, the absence of a competent ministerial structure responsible for supervising the rural development and agricultural sector and providing guidance, has been a real constraint for the development of the country. During the war, most of the agricultural

15 When the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan was established in 2002, MRRD was reborn with its new mandate, policies and strategies to promote poverty reduction and social protection in rural Afghanistan.

service delivery, extension and popularisation activities were carried out by NGOs and eventually by other international organisations. In the absence of the government, NGOs benefited from a total freedom to intervene in economic and food security. Negotiations over the technical content of programmes were practically non-existent either with the government or with donors. In this context, agencies involved in the economic and agricultural security sector were faced a void of rules: they had to improvise with varying degrees of luck, depending on the local and provincial policies and agro-ecological equations. This meant that in 2002, only a few NGOs had developed a core strategy for their action. The broad objective was to improve people's living conditions but there was no clear definition of the way that this objective would be reached or how NGOs intended to ensure sustainability.

The fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the creation of the AIA (Afghan Interim Authority) was followed by the establishment of the ITSA (Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan) in July 2002. In 2002, Langenkamp wrote the following statement which remains particularly true today: *"The local capacity dilemma is a fundamental one in any post conflict situation (Uvin 2001), and it is central in Afghanistan. When the AIA arrived in Kabul late last year, they found no treasury, ministry buildings with no windows or electricity, and precious few qualified employees."* *"There is a desire to have the administration administer all aspects of the aid operation, but the Afghan authorities do not have the necessary infrastructure yet. There is a huge gap,"* said one high-level UN official interviewed for this survey.

- The first document to outline and define the main policies and strategies for the coming years was the **National Development Framework** (NDF) presented in April 2002. This document provides a number of guidelines and principles as a framework for the reconstruction of the country. The NDF addresses the division of responsibilities and roles between the public and private sector. Provision of justice, security and equality, investment in human capital as well as social safety remain the responsibility of the state, while creating a promising environment for the private sector. The NDF sets the role of the government as regulator, policy/strategy maker, evaluator and promoter of entrepreneurial investment while production and management of the economy is assigned to the private sector. Consequently, to fulfil this new role and responsibilities, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) started to implement a lengthy and wide reaching reform to design new strategies, policies and ministerial departments in line with the goals described in the NDF. From 2002 onward, the international community insisted on the necessity to strengthen local capacity based on expertise and good governance. However this task was complicated and took time. In 2002, Langenkamp argued: *"Thus, while the principles and strategy of the ITAP (Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People) involve including the local authorities in a way not practiced previously, the reality is that the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the World Bank, and other international organizations have had to take a large role in the administration of the country."*¹⁶ In fact, the trend of the inflation of wages caused by the sudden rush of various agencies has been particularly damaging to the Afghan government who paid their employees far less than the salaries offered by many NGOs and international organisations and were not able to keep the most experienced staff. Most qualified staff have either left the country or have joined international organisations, such as UN agencies and NGOs. In the agricultural sector, the former MAAH (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry) has been seriously affected by this problem and its capacity to deliver viable and reliable services to farmers have been dramatically reduced. The remaining staff working within the (former) MAAH did not have the necessary knowledge (technical, managerial, computer skills). During the war, access to training was very limited and, even where staff did receive training, approaches, systems and methodologies were long outdated.

¹⁶ The aims and impact of aid in Afghanistan, Daniel Langenkamp

From 2002 onwards, due to the dynamism of the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) and the Ministry of Agriculture (to a lesser extent), agencies and donors gave more of their attention to the rural sector.

The Government's **Securing Afghanistan's Future** Report (April 2004), prepared before the Berlin Conference on Afghanistan (April 2004), highlights the importance of the sector and puts forward a detailed twelve-year sector investment programme. On a political and institutional level, the transitional Afghan government was paving the way with some important institutional reforms. This period has seen the emergence and development of multilateral donors, consulting firms (e.g. ALTAI), research institutes (e.g. AREU) which have begun to play a central role in terms of expertise.

2.4 2004-2007: the development paradigm

The present political and humanitarian situation remains very complex, and is rapidly changing and diversified across the country, making it difficult for agencies to place themselves on the emergency-rehabilitation-development continuum. There seems to be considerable variation in how well agencies understand the situation in the field and their real or perceived idea of the room for manoeuvre they have vis-à-vis donors. This leads to a **variety of different programmes and a lack of global strategy**. For example, some agencies are offering fully supported large-scale tool kits and inputs distribution without proper training on how they should be used in a given area, while others are implementing longer term development efforts based on the communities demands and are trying to strengthen capacity within the communities through training. Sometimes even, the same agency is implementing both types of programme: on the one hand, carrying out free distributions and on the other, trying to build sustainability based on community participation.

This makes it difficult to have a coordinated strategy for the country and may contribute to the implementation of **programme-driven, rather than a context analysis-driven approach**.

2.4.1 State building in a hazy political context

In January 2005 the MAAH was renamed Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and *Food* and a new minister, Mr Ramin, was appointed. In order to overcome the lack of government capacity at the central, provincial and district levels, the PRR (priority reform and restructuring)¹⁷ process, was launched in 2004 within the Ministry of Agriculture. It aims at rationalising ministerial organisation in order to improve the capacity of civil servants and encourage employees to stay working at the ministry for many years. The main way this achieved is by increasing salaries to attract educated and skilled people to the ministries. The interim national allowance fixes minimum and maximum salaries regarding the different grades. In some cases, for very skilled people, there is a "super scale" top-up in order to increase the monthly salary. However, even if this reform allows the ministries to retain some of their skilled and experienced staff, government salaries are far too low to compete with NGO and UN wages.

At the end of 2006, the ministry changed its name once again and became the MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock). Indeed, the ministry has changed its name a number of times¹⁸ and this is symbolic the difficulties it has encountered in defining its

¹⁷ The PRR process is part of the IARSC process (Independent Administrative Reform and Civil service commission) created in 2002 following the Bonn agreement to reform and rationalize the civil service in Afghanistan. The PRR process is funded by the World Bank.

¹⁸ MAL (Ministry of agriculture and Livestock from 2002-2004) MAAH (Ministry of Agriculture and Animal husbandry from 2004-2005), MAAHF (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and food from 2004-2006), MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in 2006) and finally MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (2006-?))

mandate, objectives, role and responsibilities. However, we can highlight some improvements within the ministry. Roles and responsibilities are better defined and shared between the different stakeholders. However, there is still a persisting lack of consultation and coordination with the other ministries involved in the rural affairs (MEW, MRRD, MCN for instance).

One of the main challenges of the years to come will be to ensure that MAIL staff have ownership of MAIL strategies and main policies. Since 2002, most of the policy design and strategic choices have been carried out by external stakeholders with their own agendas and their own views. In many instances, these policies were contradictory which hampered the development of a clear strategy.

2.4.2 Defining policies for who?

The Master Plan for the agricultural sector was launched in late 2005 and defines three main pillars for the development of agriculture which should be based on the development of the private sector: food security, livestock and horticulture.

The Master Plan is dedicated to prioritising the public services needed to fully mobilise the immense private sector potential. It guards against subsidies to public provision of any goods and services that the private sector can provide. It specifies rules and regulations that should foster private sector growth, especially in exports. The Master Plan warns that *“in Afghanistan at this stage of rehabilitation and development the private sector farmer and entrepreneurs require critical government services if they are to compete on international markets. Some of these services are purely temporary, much provided by foreign assistance and envisioned as provided outside of government institutions, to disappear when no longer needed.”* The ANDS benchmark state that *“By end-1389 (20 March 2011): The necessary institutional, regulatory and incentive framework to increase production and productivity will be established to create an enabling environment for legal agriculture and agriculture-based rural industries, and public investment in agriculture will increase by 30 percent; particular consideration will be given to perennial horticulture, animal health and food security by instituting specialized support agencies and financial service delivery mechanisms, supporting farmers' associations, branding national products, disseminating timely price and weather-related information and statistics, providing strategic research and technical assistance and securing access to irrigation and water management systems.”*

2.4.3 Development of the private sector: a mirage for the poorest?

The development of the private sector will definitely strengthen the Afghan economy as it can fuel the local economy and replace certain imports. Nevertheless it will be important for the GoA and NGOs to carefully monitor the way the private sector engages, as there can be negative impacts, for both Afghan consumers and producers. It is important for the Ministry to clarify the strategies targeting the most vulnerable farmers. Out of the 396 pages of the Master Plan, the word “vulnerable” is only quoted 13 times! The core principle is basically that the development of the private sector, will, in the end, help the poorest¹⁹. This statement might be –at least partly- correct in certain areas. However, we can only wonder when this will happen? How many years should the poorest wait before benefiting from private sector developments? For the time being, what does the state plan for the most vulnerable? One of the most common criticisms towards the current process of reconstruction in Afghanistan is the impression that the 'rich get rich quick' class at the top will become increasingly wealthier,

19 “It is the multipliers from that increase in farm incomes that will drive the rural non-farm sector and take care of the poor. Much of that increase can come soon through large increases in the production per hectare of existing orchards and vineyards. Farmers will grow wealthier just from the gradual maturing of tree and vine plantings, but the rural non-farm population will be delayed in receiving the benefits of cash income increase.”

while the poor who were encouraged to invest heavily in reconstruction and promised prosperity will be overlooked.

2.4.4 Changing perceptions of NGO roles

At present, NGO roles and their legitimacy are for the main part remain overlooked and underestimated. Many stakeholders are persuaded that NGOs no longer have a role to play in the rural sector and everything should be handled by private companies. Many interlocutors believe that now that the relief period is over, NGOs should leave the country. However, few people were able to define how the needs of the poorest should be handled in the future.

We also met some donor representatives who argued that emergency NGOs should leave the country as the relief period has ended. The in-depth understanding of the local situation that NGOs have developed over (in some cases) 20 or 25 years of presence in the country is not always considered to be a comparative advantage.

Since 2001, the agricultural sector has been organised and developed at the institution level without considering a possible role for the NGOs as a “valuable” partner. Agriculture has been considered as a “technical” sector that should be covered by the private sector and some specialised (international) organisations and consulting firms. Most NGOs encountered during the survey emphasised that it has become very difficult to mobilise funds for their projects. Most of them had to adapt very rapidly to the new institutional environment and to get involved in new and unusual roles and tasks. Therefore, many NGOs are today confined to the role of facilitating or implementing partner. They highly rely on such programmes as the NSP to be able to stay in Afghanistan.

Institutional changes have reduced drastically the scope of intervention open to NGOs. It is only over the last few months that government staff appear to have understood that NGOs might have a role to play.

2.4.5 2006-2007: Food security issues: back in the agenda?

From 2004 to the end of 2006, many stakeholders have had the impression that food security issues were not seen as being a priority by the MAIL. Even though the Master Plan for the agricultural sector set food security as one of the main objectives for the coming years, the focus was clearly on building policies and on launching the development of the private sector. The 2006 drought (which affected more than 4 million people) raised once again the question of food insecurity. Yet, after five years of massive aid intervention in Afghanistan, food security remains a challenge for the development of Afghanistan. However, in practice the most recent results of the 2005 NRVA show that more than 42% of the Afghan population suffer from poor food diversity. Yet, all actors are repeatedly reminded of the inherent agro-ecological vulnerability with the recurring droughts and devastating floods. Prevailing military confrontation in the large rural southern and eastern band of the country are dramatically affecting the recovery of the rural economy and indeed facilitates the dissemination of poppy production and its related set of illegal activities.

The effects of the drought, the (bad) results of the NRVA and the growing disappointment of the Afghan population towards the government has brought food security related issues back to the heart of the Ministry's agenda.

3 Who is who in the agricultural sector?

3.1 A hazy definition of the mandate

Agriculture-related activities in Afghanistan are covered by different ministries. The most important ministries are the MAIL, the MRRD (Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development) and the MEW (Ministry of Energy and Water). Irrigation issues (at the canal level) have been entrusted to the MEW, agricultural research, extension, irrigation at the plot level and livestock to the MAIL, and rural development/employment/poverty programmes to MRRD. Their scopes of intervention and the limits of their mandate often remain unclear; areas of overlap/gap are currently being identified and addressed. For instance, four ministries and a government agency are directly involved in the water sector with overlapping roles and responsibilities. Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW) is in charge of major irrigation infrastructure and of planning, building and maintaining major water storage and water conveyance facilities. The MAIL is responsible for production and, therefore, of on-farm infrastructure and water management. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Ministry of Mines (MoM), and National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) also play a role in water management but there is a lack clarity on their respective roles which adversely affects performance.

In February 2005, when the Afghan parliament reconfirmed (or rejected) the different ministers, the option of combining the MAIL with the MRRD was considered but eventually it was decided not to take this option, apparently because it was feared that the very powerful MRRD would absorb the current MAIL. In the post-2001 transitional context, donors have given the priority to the MRRD at the sub national level. The roles and responsibilities between the urban, agriculture and water/irrigation sectors are not well distributed nor defined between the ministries. For instance, the MEW, MRRD, MAIL and MoUD should increase their links and establish a common policy on certain crosscutting issues (allocation of water resources, etc.). The fact that land tenure issues are now under the responsibility of the MAIL can be seen as a positive trend. In the coming years, the MEW and the MAIL need to be given increased responsibilities to enable them to implement programmes at the field level and increase their legitimacy.

3.1.1 Policy making and private sector development: the heart of MAIL's mandate

The vision of the (current) MAIL as stated in 2004 in the policy and strategy framework for the rehabilitation of agriculture and natural resource sector of Afghanistan is the following: *"Our vision is an integrated socio-economic development approach generated by a vibrant agricultural sector built upon sustainable use of natural resources that can contribute significantly to prosperity, peace and social justice in Afghanistan"*. Regarding the mission of the current MAIL, the same document states that: *"the MAAH together with MRRD and MIWRE (previous MEW) will have completed a process of reform and structural adjustment which will have laid down the foundation for a dynamic rural economy with increased production, a high level of productivity and sustainable use of natural resources."*

The lack of technical capacity and knowledge is at the core of the current problems. The lack of understanding of the real problems of the Afghan farmers and their diversity is one of the main bottlenecks. The various advisors (working for different bi- and multilateral agencies) have different views and ideas, which are often contradictory. This lack of clarity and transparency is another major problem. Afghan farmers are not aware that the main roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture have evolved considerably since the 1970s. Yet, Afghan farmers are expecting different services from the MAIL (seed and inputs distribution like in the 1970s) whereas the MAIL's policies are more oriented toward policy making and regulating private sector development. There is certainly an urgent need for the

MAIL to communicate to a wider extent about their strategies, new roles and responsibilities in order to prevent raising farmers' expectations.

3.1.2 The MRRD in charge of the rural development

Nowadays, the MRRD is in charge of the rehabilitation and construction of rural infrastructure. However its mandate - "to reduce rural poverty through developing, financing and executing an equitable and effective social policy in Afghanistan" - is very broad and generic. The MRRD is undoubtedly the ministry which is the most favoured by donors since 2001. Most of the expensive programmes in Afghanistan (NSP, NEEP, MISFA, EHRI...) are administered via the MRRD. In January 2006, the MRRD edited a document called: "*Strategy and program summary: Poverty reduction through pro poor Growth*". This document defines the reorientation of MRRD strategy: "*Having MRRD promoting and implementing more pro-poor policies that are responsive to the needs of the poor emphasizes our reorientation*". The portfolio of MRRD programmes aims at addressing the current technological, social and financial capital deficits. The MRRD needs to clarify its mandate that remains quite broad.

The MRRD's flagship programme is the NSP. The main objective of this national scale programme is to alleviate rural poverty and establish a solid foundation for local governance by:

- *"Establishing a national network of elected Community Development Councils (CDCs);*
- *Funding priority subprojects to improve access to social and productive infrastructure, markets, and services;*
- *Strengthening community capacities through participatory processes and training; and*
- *Promoting accountability and wise use of public and private resources."*

The main objective of this well known programme is indeed the creation and development of the Community Development Councils (CDC), while the physical output, whatever its nature, is actually less important. The objective is certainly more political than really technical. The idea behind the NSP is to show the Afghan people that the government is active in the field and is capable of bringing real changes to people's life. The funds made available by the programme for the creation of assets requested by the community are substantial and it cannot be denied that some interesting physical outputs have been achieved. Although, the NSP has many drawbacks and imperfections (this aspect will be detailed further), one should bear in mind that the NSP has clocked up some considerable achievements. The NSP, for example has seen the completion of more than 4,500 rural infrastructure projects with over 10,000 projects ongoing²⁰. However, the NSP's programmes will not by themselves solve issues related to vulnerability if agriculture and irrigation programmes – two dimensions which are central to livelihoods in Afghanistan – are not supported. Development projects should be adapted to the variety of needs and constraints in a given area. The rehabilitation of infrastructure will not be sufficient to increase production, tackle food insecurity issues in the long term and develop a strong agro-sector.

3.1.3 The MEW responsible for part of the irrigation infrastructure

The MEW is the responsible authority to protect, manage and develop water resources and irrigation systems. "*The case of the MEW illustrates clearly the hazy (and sometimes incoherent) delimitation of mandate and responsibilities. For instance, although, the MEW remains the main institution sharing sub-sectors with other government bodies, various functions and responsibilities concerning water management have been redistributed among the Afghan ministries and government institutions as following:*

- *Urban water supply with the municipalities and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing*

²⁰ ACBAR briefing paper on aid effectiveness, nov 2006

- *Rural Water Supply currently managed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development*
- *Irrigation water by MEW (ex MIWRE): on-farm management and irrigation extension are the joint responsibility of MEW and MAAHF and WUA (Water users associations)*
- *Hydropower by MEW*
- *Underground WR by MEW (research, studies) and Ministry of Mines and Industries (MMI) (quality rest and exploitation)."*

Source: Extracts from N.Riviere,2005, Water and irrigation water sector review, LRRD project Groupe URD

At the farm level, water issues, infrastructure, crop requirements in terms of water, and more generally livelihood issues are inextricably linked. Liaison and effective coordination between these ministries and other institutions working in the sector will be crucial in delivering public investment and support services to rural areas and promoting private sector participation in rural investment programmes. Moreover, regarding the current trend where priority is given to the development of horticulture, it seems that water allocation and water management aspects are being overlooked. Fruit production is water demanding and the development of horticultural projects in areas where water allocation is scarce should be particularly sensitive to water allocation and management issues.

3.2 Who are the main stakeholders?

3.2.1 The European Commission

Regarding the EC strategies in the agricultural sector since 2001, we can distinguish four main periods:

- **Between 2001 and 2003**, together with ECHO, the EC²¹ mainly funded emergency programmes based on distribution (food, seeds, tool kits, fertilizers and other agro inputs).
- **2003** was undoubtedly the turning point regarding donor strategies, including the EC.
- **From 2003 onwards**, the EC started cutting back relief programmes to concentrate on rehabilitation programmes (roads, bridges, canals) through NGOs and started a more integrated approach and longer-term programmes.
- From **2003-2005**, many programmes were funded in different sub-sectors without real priorities (in term of sub-sectors). The livelihood approach and then, alternative livelihoods programs, were new ways of working on an integrated approach.
- **From 2005 onwards** the EC clearly stepped out of emergency and rehabilitation programmes to focus on development projects with a longer-term approach. The EC is more demanding in terms of needs assessment. Project implementation was much more based on a thought-out analysis of the situation and needs.

Today, the **European Commission** (EC) is undertaking a broad range of interventions across most sub sectors to improve agricultural livelihoods by diversification and improving productivity, and food security. The EC is funding a seed commercialisation project, undertaking an irrigation system rehabilitation project based on a river basin approach (Kunduz River Basin Project), and as well as integrated livestock and horticulture projects. The EC is supporting a number of NGOs who are implementing projects in rural areas and supporting the environmental capacity-building programme for the Environment Department in MEW. Together with DFID and GTZ, the EC also supports some alternative livelihoods projects. Some livelihood-oriented programmes are still being funded in the most remote

²¹ Afghanistan is one of the rare country in the world where EC and ECHO are present at the same time.

areas. The EC is also involved in two other main sectors: **livestock²² and horticulture** which are two of the three main pillars of the agricultural sector described in the Master Plan.

Livestock sector

- Disease control (mainly with Mercy Corps in the south of the country and Madera in the eastern part)
- Support to the government to set up the legislative framework for the livestock sector.
- Support the government in setting up a network of the veterinary analytical laboratories.

Horticulture sector²³

Technical assistance is provided by the EC to support the government in drawing up legislation on different aspects regarding the horticultural sector (markets, supply chain, quality control aspects). The technical assistance provided by the EC aims at supporting the government to revive agricultural research centres throughout the country.

The **Perennial Horticulture Development project** (PHDP) should start in different areas in the coming months.²⁴ The purpose of the programme is to contribute to the general economic recovery of Afghanistan. Support to farmers is given through their organisations and with the assistance of NGOs in the prioritised fields as follows:

- Support to farmers is given through their organisations
- Improvement of nursery growing standards;
- Introduction of new / improved production procedures to increase the quality of products (orchard establishment, trellising, pruning, pollination, thinning and hand trimming techniques, soil science, drip irrigation, pest and disease management);
- Development of post harvest handling, processing standards and marketing channels.

At last, as detailed in the water/irrigation sector review by Riviere (2005), water shade management approach is strongly supported by the EC.

Whether the EC will be involved as per se in food security related programs remains unclear. It seems that the strategy tends at addressing food security issues through different types of programs which are more market development oriented or through an increase of water allocation at the plot level. However, these programs are mostly implemented in the more productive areas, whereas communities suffering from food insecurity live in remote areas and/or have no or limited access to land and water.

3.2.2 United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

USAID has a large integrated programme in the sector focusing on improving livelihoods. USAID supports the reestablishment and development of market-based systems with access to improved inputs (seeds, fertilizers, chemicals and credit for both farmers and traders/processors), regulatory support (vaccination laboratory, seed), improving technologies, enterprise diversification (crop and livestock), and commodity market access. USAID is also strongly involved in the improvement of the irrigation infrastructure via the rehabilitation and improvement of roads and market centres. Regarding implementation, the key programme was the USD150 million Rebuilding Agriculture Markets Program (**RAMP**).

²² There are basically four main livestock programs (The Horticulture and Livestock Project (World bank / DFID), Commercial Agriculture Development (ADB – to be launched soon), The Animal Health Development Program (EC), Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Project (USAID))

²³ There are also four main programs (The Horticulture and Livestock Project (World bank / DFID), Commercial Agriculture Development (ADB to be launched soon), The PHDP (EC), Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Project (USAID))

²⁴ Proposals have been submitted by several NGOs in January 2007.

This three-year program (2003-2006) aimed at improving the lives of Afghans by increasing food supplies and food security, creating jobs, increasing incomes, and strengthening the competitiveness of Afghan agricultural products by targeting some essential sectors or domains, including: irrigation systems, market infrastructure, livestock, market opportunities and rural financial services.

The value chain approach involves a variety of enterprises and projects that work together vertically to achieve a global results. RAMP projects aimed at linking markets to farmers; farmers to inputs (like seed and fertilizer); inputs to higher value crops and yields; higher yields to storage and market facilities; market facilities to transportation; transportation to processing and market development.

The RAMP relied on a network of IPs which were selected on the basis of their management and technical assets and comparative advantages. They were mostly NGOs, but also research institutes (ICARDA) and consulting firms (DAI).

Nowadays, RAMP has been replaced by a new project namely **ASAP** (Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Project).

The main objective of the ASAP project which started at the beginning of 2007 is to create broad-based, market-led agricultural development in which private companies and farmers respond and adapt to market forces in ways that provide new economic opportunities for rural Afghan communities.

The approach is based on the four following pillars:

- Identify markets with growth potential
- Help firms and producers identify and overcome their constraints that prohibit them from competing profitably in those markets,
- Monitor results to build on successes and make adjustments,
- Work with government to create policies that facilitate the success of the private sector enterprises.

Other US programmes support the Afghan Conservation Corps to implement labour-based tree planting and other irrigation rehabilitation activities.

The Goal of the USAID-funded program **FEWS NET** (Famine Early Warning Systems Network in Afghanistan) is to strengthen the abilities of the different aid stakeholders to manage risk of food insecurity through the provision of timely and analytical early warning and vulnerability information. FEWS NET is an activity that collaborates with international, national and regional partners to provide timely and rigorous early warning and vulnerability information on emerging or evolving food security issues.

Since 2000, FEWS NET has adopted a livelihood framework for food security analysis. It is worth highlighting the potential of this initiative. While most food security assessment methods focus on food availability, the livelihood approach focuses mainly on food access. The broader livelihood framework enables us to see food security as the result of many complex relations and interactions between many factors (technical, social, economic, etc.) and no longer a set of data disconnected from the complex reality.

3.2.3 World Bank (WB)

The World Bank's activities are focused on the water resource sub sector, supporting emergency irrigation rehabilitation, establishing the hydrological network, institutional strengthening and capacity building of MeW. This project named **Emergency Irrigation**

Rehabilitation Project (EIRP) is implemented by the emergency and rehabilitation unit of FAO.

The USD20 million grant for the **Horticulture and Livestock Project** (HLP) is designed to enhance productivity and stimulate increased and more efficient production of horticulture and livestock products. It will improve incentives for private investment and strengthen institutional capacity in agriculture. The project is the first stage in a programme that will unfold over the coming decade to support the horticulture and livestock sub-sectors nationwide.

NGOs will be partners in coordinating the implementation of technical field operations in collaboration with the MAIL provincial offices.

3.2.4 The Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB is a multilateral development financial institution owned by 64 members, 46 from the region and 18 from other parts of the globe. **The main key strategies** of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the agriculture and natural resource sector are based on two main pillars: technical assistance (TA) and capacity building. In term of programme implementation, ADB mainly funds NRM programs. Parts of the funds are also allocated to rural livelihood and monitoring and evaluation support (MRRD).

The **Commercial Agriculture Development Project** (CADP) is a five-year project (2007-2012) which aims at agrobusiness growth (livestock and horticulture). The overall cost of the project is USD40 million (loan to government). This project is quite similar to the one implemented by the World Bank. It aims at strengthening the agro-processing and marketing systems of the agricultural products. This project is currently at the preparation phase.

ADB also strongly supports the government in developing sector policies, strategies, and planning processes and institutional reform to create the environment for improving sector productivity and efficiency (technical assistance).

One of the main strategies is to support capacity building efforts. ADB aims at building and strengthening government and community-based institutions.

3.3 JICA

The Japanese government is funding the **Japan Funds for Poverty Reduction** (JFPR). This four-year project (USD18 million) will be implemented in Bamiyan, Balkh, Nangahar and Kandahar. The objective is to establish four rural business support centres. They will bring together the necessary human resources to remove barriers to the agriculture-based income generating efforts of the rural poor. These centres will be established by the private sector. NGOs are welcome to apply.

3.4 FAO and the other UN agencies

FAO is one of the most experienced stakeholders, due to its longstanding presence in Afghanistan and involvement in the agriculture sector (since 1989). FAO focuses on developing rural areas by putting information within reach, sharing policy expertise and bringing expert technical. FAO works with three counterpart ministries: MAIL, MEW, MRRD. FAO internal units and programmes also appear to suffer from a lack of coordination and exchange. FAO also aims at sharing information and developing regional and national capacities and controlling major trans-boundary animals and plant pests and diseases. FAO also assists the policies, strategies and legislation to strengthen the capacities of the MAIL and MEW, strengthen livelihoods of vulnerable farmers and herders and facilitate the work of

the private sector. The mandate of FAO in Afghanistan is to support agricultural and environmental rehabilitation and assist the country to reach a sustainable food security.

3.4.1 Regular programmes

- NFSP: National Food security program

The main objective of SPFS is to ensure adequate supply of food for the population by increasing the household's diet diversity, incomes and areas under irrigation. This project will be implemented by the MAIL. It remains unclear whether NGOs will be asked to be partly in charge of the implementation of the projects. This project has not started yet since it has not succeeded in bringing together all the necessary funds. The main challenge will certainly be the quality of the assessment prior to project design and implementation. As mentioned earlier, food security related issues vary considerably throughout the country. Opportunities, needs and constraints have to be analysed to be able to design relevant, effective and sustainable programmes.

- Household Food Security, Nutrition & Livelihoods

The main objective is to improve the food security and nutritional situation of vulnerable households in Afghanistan by an increased diversification of food production, a better integration of nutrition objectives and activities in agricultural and food security programmes, the development of nutrition education, capacity strengthening and raising awareness on gender and advocacy. This programme seems to be really successful as it is based on a holistic approach to the causes of malnutrition. It aims at introducing nutrition objectives to various sectors (in agriculture programmes, in health education, education, wat/san, etc.).

- Managing biodiversity for sustainable food security and nutrition in Afghanistan

The overall objective is to improve nutrition, food security and livelihoods in Afghan communities through effective use and conservation of local biodiversity and managing in a sustainable way species with high nutritional and/or commercial value, in increasing consumption of local food species with high nutritional value and the incomes of food insecure households through the commercialisation of local natural resources. This project will start in the coming months for a three-year period and will be implemented by the MAIL.

- SALEH (Sustainable Agricultural Livelihoods in the Eastern Hazarajat)

The main objective of this DFID-funded project is to improve the livelihoods and well-being of the people of eastern Hazarajat in a sustainable manner by improving food security, income generation and employment opportunities and resource utilisation through community-based action and promoting planning, information dissemination and replication of lessons for improving agricultural livelihoods and natural resource management, focused initially at the provincial and district levels. The evaluation of the project conducted in 2006 was really positive and highlighted the fact that the community-based approach of the SALEH project was a real success and that the model should be adopted in other provinces. It would be of great interest to increase the duration of such a project and to capitalise on its successes.

-FAAHM Project

The main objective is to identify, collate, and organise data on agriculture, rural markets, food security and nutrition, in order to establish a food security database in order to assist the MAIL and other stakeholders taking decisions regarding budget allocation and types of projects.

-Development of Integrated Dairy Schemes

The main goal of this project (implemented in Kabul, Parwan, Logar, Balkh and Kunduz) is to improve food security in Afghanistan by raising the production capacity of the national dairy sector through the development of integrated model dairy schemes.

- Alternative Agricultural Livelihoods: (AALP)

The goal of this project is to contribute to the sustainable elimination of illicit opium poppy cultivation by 2013 throughout the country and to contribute to national policy through the development of nationally owned alternative livelihood strategies and action plans (farm and off-farm livelihoods diversification activities implemented in pilot provinces).

- Seed sector strengthening and development

The main objective of the seed programme is to produce foundation seed for further multiplication to promote and support private sector development. marketing certified seed. This programme also aims at strengthening government capacity and developing and adapting the seed policy.

3.4.2 Emergency and rehabilitation Unit (ERU)

The main objective is to improve food security and farmers' incomes in rural communities and to prevent asset depletion. It also aims at reducing post-harvest losses through provision of grain and food storage facilities, enhancing local technical capacity to construct small-medium capacity metallic silos through transfer of improved know-how to local artisans. Distribution of seeds, tools and fertilizer to vulnerable households has taken place over the last few years as well as locust and sun pest campaigns.

The four main programmes are the following:

- Provision of storage facilities to vulnerable households and rural communities (14,000 silos and twelve warehouses)
- Seeds, tools and fertilizers distribution

It is important for stakeholders to reflect on the utility of the ERU in Afghanistan and its link with the rest of the FAO. The fact that ERU is a distinct body within the FAO does not always result in the definition of a real strategy to improve the links between the relief approach and development. Needs assessments are mainly based on secondary data produced by NRVA, UNHCR and IOM. The validity of having a 'one kit approach' in a country known for its extraordinary diversity (altitudinal, climatic, ethnic, accessibility, and so on) remains an important issue. Inappropriateness of certain items indeed should also have been reported. The targeting and the level of adaptation to the specificities of the targeted areas are limited by the standardised approach of its design. Yet, the selection of beneficiaries for this type of agricultural programme is difficult since the agencies involved have to consider two groups of criteria, one related to vulnerability and another to capacity.

There is also an inherent contradiction between the characteristics of the most vulnerable farmers (who are mostly landless) and the criteria associated with capacity (access to land and water).

- **Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Project: (EIRP)**

(Rehabilitation of Irrigation Schemes – 280,000 ha, Rehabilitation of 167 Hydrological and 30 Meteorological Stations, Capacity building. Cf. Water/irrigation sector review)

- The Greening Afghanistan Initiative Network (GAIN)

The Greening of Afghanistan Initiative (GAIN) is a joint UN programme that aims to improve Afghanistan's environment. GAIN was launched by FAO with the support from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), WFP, UNOPS, IOM, UNEP, UNDP. The objective is to help widows and other vulnerable groups establish their own nurseries, encourage school children to adopt trees and support communities in large-scale rehabilitation activities. Seven provincial training centre nurseries have already been established and are expected to produce over 3.5 million saplings per year (Herat, Bamiyan Takhar and Mazar-e-Sharif). The main purposes of the GAIN project are to:

- Increase reforestation around schools and communities:

- Build local capacity
- Assist the most vulnerable populace
- Develop a network of nurseries production to supply much needed planting material
- Facilitate the development of private forestry sector

The main concern about the GAIN is that stakeholders adopt the same approach in each region and pay little heed to local specificities. For instance, it would be interesting to understand why the GAIN project has decided to give 2,500 trees to each female beneficiary. The distribution of such a large number of trees might raise some problems. Of these 2,500 trees, the women are supposed to plant 500 on their land and sell the remaining 2,000. If ten women are given 2,500 trees in a village, a total of 25,000 trees will have to be sold in the village. There are lots of bottlenecks within the GAIN project (technical, community mobilisation, targeting of the beneficiaries, coordination issues, etc.). The fact that this project is handled by ERU is not really comprehensible as forestry approaches should be based on a long-term process.

3.4.3 World Food Programme / FFW

Since the establishment of a transitional government in June 2002, WFP's operations have shifted from emergency assistance to rehabilitation and recovery. On average, WFP distributes food to 3.5 million people each year, primarily in remote, food-insecure rural areas. Emergency food assistance programmes allows the agency to respond rapidly when communities are struck by natural disasters, such as floods and drought. The WFP continues to coordinate emergency responses with the government, UN and other cooperating partners. The WFP will target chronically poor and food-insecure families, schoolchildren, teachers, illiterate people, tuberculosis patients and their families, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable women and girls.

3.4.4 PRT involvement in agriculture and livestock projects

With a total of twenty-four Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) now operational across Afghanistan (and with more planned in the near future), the PRT phenomenon is still growing.

It should be noted that the PRT programme (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) led by NATO also implements a variety of activities related to agriculture. However, it was not possible to gather further information on this relatively opaque programme. However we should underline that PRT's interventions raise different issues. Firstly, military actors are not well trained in development issues and their approaches are often undertaken with a weak community ownership or ability to support community maintenance over time.²⁵

Furthermore, PRT objectives often aim for a quick impact, which might be synonymous with short-term and ineffective assistance. For instance PRTs are still implementing canal desilting programs whereas some NGOs have been struggling for years to encourage farmers to be in charge of this task themselves. Likewise, when PRTs distribute free seeds (wheat or vegetables) to farmers when there are no emergency needs, this clearly hampers the long-term strategies of other stakeholders. For instance, many NGOs and the FAO have been working for several years on the development of private seed enterprises where farmers produce and multiply improved seeds in order to sell them. Free distribution of wheat can easily ruin all the chances of sustainability of such (useful and relevant) projects and blur the understanding of the populations regarding the strategies that are proposed to them. *“Furthermore, PRTs often want to give free vaccinations to livestock in their area of operations without soliciting community participation. Repeated attempts have been made by PRTs to implement these activities – with adverse effects on the national strategy for*

²⁵ Many NGOs' mandates prevent them from accepting support coming through military channels because it might hamper their preservation of neutral humanitarian operational space.

livestock vaccinations. Evidence from NGOs implementing this national programme across the country, including Kabul, Laghman and Zabul, indicates that the free vaccinations undermine the partially privatised para-vet system that they are establishing with the Government of Afghanistan.”

3.5 NGO roles in the agricultural sector

During the fieldwork, interviews were conducted with different national and international NGOs working in the rural development sectors (cf. Annexe 2).

3.5.1 Implementing (or Facilitating) Partners within larger interventions or programmes

Prior to 2001, NGOs were mostly in charge of food and non-food items distributions via UN-led programmes (FFW or QIP implemented by UNOPS, WFP, FAO or other agencies).

Today, NGOs still have an implementing role regarding some projects led by the government (such as NSP and PRT launched in 2003). Most often, they are only responsible for programme implementation and have little room for manoeuvre in the design of the project itself. They have a role of coordination and linkage between the targeted communities and the government (for NSP) or a position of facilitating partner between the communities and the army in charge of the PRT.

One of the main achievements of the NSP is to have given communities a chance to have a direct impact on their future, more than through the traditional *shuras*. Thanks to NGOs, the CDCs are seen as a bridge between the communities and government structures. Beyond the general problems (burden of paperwork, corruption, difficulties in checking the real number of beneficiaries, technical problems on the outputs) the main problem of the NSP regarding the agriculture sector is that it is not based on an in-depth assessment of real needs.

According to some NGOs, the main difficulties encountered are at the provincial level.

- MRRD staff are generally very demanding and sometimes reluctant to consider all the difficulties that the IPs have to face in the field (security, lack of available dates). A lack of communication with Kabul offices has had negative consequences on the relations between the IPs/OC/MRRD staff. Many IPs also note that NSP procedures (mainly in terms of reporting) are not well known at the provincial level.
- During a given NSP project, 48 forms have to be filled in by the IPs and the communities. Hence, many IPs complain about the time they have to spend filling in paperwork and underline the fact that asking the communities to write a report every three months does not make sense and is really time consuming.
- In some cases, the relevance and sustainability of the community's choice can be questioned. For instance, in many cases the CDCs chose to buy a generator in order to provide the village with electricity. Is electricity truly the highest priority for all and a real need? NGOs implementing NSP programmes are being confined to the role of facilitating bodies and are no longer given a chance to point out the difference between *expressed* needs and *real* needs²⁶. It is sometimes difficult for communities as a coherent group to carry out a long-term and general assessment of their own needs. Moving towards a bottom-up approach is without any contest a good and necessary step in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. However, ensuring that the choices made by the communities are the most relevant and address real needs remains a real challenge.

²⁶ “One of the most important issues at stake is understanding people's real needs. This entails bringing together agency expertise and their perception of the situation and the affected population's expectations and requests” Quality COMPAS see www.compasqualite.org/compas/outil

- Moreover, the standardisation of the NSP programme is criticised by NGOs involved in implementing NSP programs or otherwise. The fact that Women's CDC's should be implemented without any regard to women's status or decision-making power is not well understood by some communities. As NSP procedures are very rigid, the IPs encounter a number of difficulties in identifying ways which could be acceptable by the populations and in the lines of the NSP formats.
- Moreover, according to Nicolas Riviere writing on the water sector: "*Management of other natural resources (pastures, forests, etc.) does not fit in with the strict village administrative entity chosen by NSP. Many reports and officers emphasise this problem for NSP or other programmes, which do not take natural areas and borders into consideration when dealing with NRM activities.*"
- Last but not least, according to the NGO law (2005), the construction/execution part of the (sub) projects has to be allocated to private companies. This has undoubtedly severely reduced the role and work carried out by implementing partners in infrastructure-related programmes. NGOs recount that in some cases the quality of the infrastructure and the maintenance services is really low since the government is not able to check whether the norms and standards that have been set are followed.

MRRD and OC staff are aware of these structural problems or bottlenecks, and try to tackle them locally and practically. However, it is worth questioning to what extent a programme like the NSP, which is large-scale and tailored for quick implementation and satisfaction of the population and authorities, is truly flexible and can facilitate such practices. Can technical components and quality approach also be integrated? Some structural constraints related to the design and set-up of the programme, such as time, money, qualified human resources and partners, might limit such objectives and the quest for flexibility and quality.

In terms of the emergence of farmers' groups and cooperatives, it is worth mentioning some ongoing research²⁷. The MRRD is currently implementing several large programmes in order to establish democratic community-based structures for improved governance and to decentralise needs-based development planning and implementation. The establishment of the CDCs through the NSP has created important new structures for community-based development. It might be interesting to consider bringing together the CDCs and farmers' associations, cooperatives and common interest groups in the formulation and implementation of agricultural development programmes.

3.5.2 NGOs' own projects

Since the wartime, specific fundraising mechanisms, mostly originating from the EU (Europaid and ECHO funds) and a few individual European countries, allowed international NGOs to propose and implement their own projects. According to NGO representatives we have met during our interviews since 2003/04, this process has become quite rare and it is increasingly difficult to propose ad hoc projects to donors. Today some donors are quite reluctant to fund projects proposed by NGOs. Before 2003/4 most NGOs were accustomed to analysing people's needs, setting up project proposals and submitting them to donors that they consider to be appropriate for funding this kind of project.

Since 2004 onwards, most of the time, when NGOs submit a response to donor call for proposal, they have (according to donors) more or less flexibility to adapt their propositions to the needs of the communities. Over the past twelve months, donors are willing to channel their funds through the relevant ministries. However, the main problem is that most of the ministries remain quite weak regarding procedures and technical capacities and are finding it difficult to select, monitor and evaluate NGO programmes.

²⁷ Sanne Chipeta, Support to strategic planning for sustainable rural livelihoods – Afghanistan: Concepts for Community Based Agricultural Service Systems in Afghanistan, First Mission Report, Draft, Danish Agricultural Advisory Service, January 2006

Combining relief, rehabilitation and development activities was also a main concern for NGOs. In 2006, many NGOs who were previously engaged in long-term development strategies, in which free distributions or CFW projects were no longer implemented to avoid confusing the perceptions of the community and to increase their participation, decided to implement relief projects with free distributions. This has give rise to much debate within the NGO community where some staff were opposed to the implementation of relief programmes and other were willing to fulfil emergency needs. Moreover, due to a lack of information on the drought-affected areas, traditional coping mechanisms put in place by the communities, and on the respective strategies of the different stakeholders, the targeting of the population was weak in certain areas and some programmes overlapped.

Ensuring proper links in between relief, rehabilitation and development at the field level implies that the mandate, principles and strategies are well established and widely shared. It also implies that at the upper level (donors and government) a clear strategy has been defined which incorporates a relief response into the broader development strategy. This is not yet the case in Afghanistan. Donors and the government alike still have different agendas and coordination is still poor. Even if this type of initiative has not been sufficiently pursued and developed, the absence of a learning and capitalisation process is regrettable and is a significant omission within programme design and policy-making processes as a whole.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Improving knowledge

The Afghan agro-system and thus farmers' strategies and coping mechanisms are highly diversified throughout Afghanistan. Today, the limited information on these aspects (site-specific, poor global view, limited knowledge of the different types of farming systems) and the lack of proper mechanisms to capitalise on the analysis and experience of humanitarian aid actors can result in a very biased assessment. The **general weaknesses in assessment** are increasingly recognised and certain agencies have included in their 2007 programmes a number of farming system analyses. These include livelihoods analysis, seed systems, pastoral systems, land tenure issues, micro-finance, irrigation, social water management and a comprehensive understanding of gender roles. At the same time, with the Master Plan, the Ministry of Agriculture drew up a real strategic agricultural policy including technological options and quality control choices. However, the implementation agenda of the Master Plan remains unclear. The MAIL has been slow in launching the implementation process. Since, the situation has clearly improved since the end of 2006. Most NGOs have a very limited understanding of the objectives and priorities set by the Master Plan and the ANDS and when they do, they wonder what kind of role they can play in the field. The main challenge at present is to start the implementation without excluding either the population nor the NGO community. A real action plan should be drafted to give a clear picture of the different steps and issues that need to be tackled by donors and aid stakeholders.

4.2 Tackling food insecurity

The issue of relevance and role of food aid in Afghanistan is still the subject of hot debate: some claim food aid needs have been over estimated (Neun & Fitzherbert, 2003), while the results of the NRVA 2005 tend to confirm that many Afghan households still suffer from acute food insecurity and are in need of food aid until longer-term social security and safety nets are established.

Tackling food security issues in Afghanistan remains a challenge. It is urgent to put food security and the broader issue of "economic security" at the centre of development within the country as a whole. In view of the extraordinary resilience of the Afghan people,

programmes supporting food security represent a powerful potential entry point in order to strengthen people's trust in the afghan state. Food security cannot be reduced to a number of calories: it has a cultural, site specific and agro-ecological definition.

The issue of food security in a state where relief /rehabilitation and development are part of the same context has to be tackled from a much more encompassing approach than just food aid and agricultural recovery. It requires a proactive perspective based on five different angles, corresponding to five important elements of the continuum between emergency rehabilitation and development: analysis of causes, prevention, early warning, improvement of coping mechanisms, coherent strategies for a shared development of the national economy.

Food needs should be analysed in a holistic framework that includes issues of food availability, access, consumption and utilisation to identify bottlenecks and constraints that a response should aim to avoid.

Food needs should be placed in the context of livelihoods.

Assessments should include:

- context analysis;
- appraisal of local capacity and existing responses;
- analysis of constraints and risks.

Chronic malnutrition (mountainous areas) requires rehabilitation-type work and long-term development programmes where food security objectives remain of the utmost importance. Temporary drought affected areas (such as northern Afghanistan in 2006²⁸) may benefit from well targeted food aid when needed, whereas the development of areas affected by long-term drought (southern Afghanistan) may benefit from innovative programmes (water harvesting, diversification, etc.). In the case of an emergency, such as the 2006 drought, free seeds distribution may occur but one needs to make sure that irrigation water is available and the targeting needs to be done properly to ensure that the most vulnerable are being targeted. Wide-scale distribution programmes of seeds and agricultural tools should be discouraged since it seriously handicaps the prospects of effective demand-driven services, which is, in theory, the overall objective of the MAIL.

Food aid issues, including relevance and limitations in Afghanistan, are still subject to vast debate. In certain circumstances, where it may be relevant for the aid community to engage in free seed distribution, such as drought, flooding just after sowing, locusts or other pests, or in some parts of the country, such as remote and mountainous areas, it is important that these operations are well prepared and beneficiaries are targeted carefully. In all cases, free distributions should be based on a thorough assessment and followed by an in-depth evaluation and lesson learning exercise.

WFP's role in needs assessment should be clarified with regard to other stakeholders such as other United Nations agencies and government institutions to identify whose needs-assessment capacity requires strengthening. WFP's mandate is solely based on food distribution whereas food aid is not always the right answer in case of an emergency. There

²⁸ "At the present time, there are no signs of destitution or famine but signs of heightened economic stress are evident in the northern provinces (Faryab, Jawzjan, Sari Pul, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Kunduz and Talkhar). Generally, the food security situation in the northwestern provinces (Faryab, Jawzjan, and Sari Pul provinces) is worse than in the northeastern provinces (Balkh, Baghlan, Kunduz, and Takhar provinces), with the exception of Samangan Province, which was highly drought affected. There is no evidence of increasing malnutrition rates in the drought-affected provinces. However, this may be because the drought is still at any early stage and malnutrition is a lagging indicator. " Rapid drought assessment in the northern province, FEWS net report, August 2006.

is an urgent need to implement regular assessments of the response (relevance, impacts, processes) to learn lessons and improve the quality of the response in the coming years. Yet, more response options should be available for assessment teams. This requires clear policy decisions with regard to coordination with other agencies and broadening WFP's range of responses.

As many donors are phasing out emergency programmes, the main risk is that emergency needs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis without establishing a global strategy, and this may result in various negative effects. The present distribution of roles and responsibilities in the agricultural sector is moving increasingly in favour of private sector development. However, the success of MAIL policies will mainly depend on its capacity to launch the development of the private sector and attract investors and to tackle food insecurity issues on a long-term basis.

An emergency preparedness plan should be included in the overall development framework, otherwise there is a risk that emergency situations will be treated on a case-by-case basis and this may hamper development strategies. Preventive measures should be taken to reduce risks and vulnerabilities (better management of water resources for flood control or drought mitigation, etc.). Developing a dual capacity to work in crisis situations and support development efforts is key for the future of Afghanistan's aid sector. It should be based on a clear understanding of mandates and roles and anchored in humanitarian principles.

4.3 Defining a place for NGOs

Within the agricultural sector, the role played by NGOs in the past and the potential they now have within the current institutional framework and in view of programming trends are undervalued. The prevailing criticisms directed at NGOs within Kabul and throughout the country as a whole, are partly shared by many consultants, government stakeholders, UN representatives, as well as by some donors.

At present, NGO roles and their legitimacy are for the main part remain overlooked and underestimated. Many stakeholders are persuaded that NGOs no longer have a role to play in the rural sector and everything should be handled by private companies. Many interlocutors believe that now that the relief period is over, NGOs should leave the country. However, few people were able to define how the needs of the poorest should be handled in the future.

We also met some donor representatives who argued that emergency NGOs should leave the country as the relief period has ended. The in-depth understanding of the local situation that NGOs have developed over (in some cases) 20 or 25 years of presence in the country is not always considered to be a comparative advantage.

Since 2001, the agricultural sector has been organised and developed at the institution level without considering a possible role for the NGOs as a "valuable" partner. Agriculture has been considered as a "technical" sector that should be covered by the private sector and some specialised (international) organisations and consulting firms. Most NGOs encountered during the survey emphasised that it has become very difficult to mobilise funds for their projects. Most of them had to adapt very rapidly to the new institutional environment and to get involved in new and unusual roles and tasks. Therefore, many NGOs are today confined to the role of facilitating or implementing partner. They highly rely on such programmes as the NSP to be able to stay in Afghanistan.

Institutional changes have reduced drastically the scope of intervention open to NGOs. It is only over the last few months that government staff appear to have understood that NGOs might have a role to play.

Key services are still absent across much of the country. In terms of the agricultural sector, food insecurity is major issue that merits attention because it continues to fuel the disappointment of the Afghan people and might push some of the poorest back to war against the government. NGOs, as key development partners, with valuable sources of knowledge, are a critical resource for the internal community and the Government of Afghanistan for meeting the gaps in service provision (whilst facilitating the development of local providers) and strengthening civil society. They are currently massively underutilised and are relegated to implementing short-term contracts with little funding and diversity. A withdrawal of NGOs from the provinces due to a lack of funding might jeopardise past achievements. Some NGOs appreciate how their role has evolved in Afghanistan and it would be a missed opportunity to exclude them as key development actors. NGOs are a valuable resource with technical and in-country expertise.

NGOs should not be perceived as a threat to the private sector but rather an opportunity for businesses to reach rural communities / producers and have access to remote markets. In terms of input distribution and service provision, actors should jointly develop sustainable interventions that do not jeopardise emerging markets or generate dependency, and instead facilitate the community's sense of involvement and ownership.

4.4 How to link the development to the agro-business sector with food security issues?

The main challenges facing the development of the agricultural industry in Afghanistan are linked to institutional capacity and knowledge management and capitalisation.

Two options for increasing food production have always existed in Afghanistan:

- 1) raising the yield/surface area through intensification of existing irrigated areas, or increasing the land under cultivation, either by developing large scale irrigation schemes, or
- 2) expanding the area under rainfed cultivation and invest in livestock production.

Since 2005, donors and the MAI have mainly focused on the richest areas for developing the agro-business sector.

However, in many situations, both in Afghanistan and in other parts of the world, it has been demonstrated that the push for increased productivity (search for maximisation of production per unit of production factor) is contrary to farmers' objectives (minimising risks and strengthening resilience).

In many areas, strengthening resilience should have a high priority. This cannot necessarily be achieved via simple support to market forces, which have little interest in fragile areas and high risk investments. In vulnerable and often remote areas, where comparative advantages are limited, support to food security at the family and village level might need specific approaches. Denying the right to support people in these areas by simply adhering to the "value for money" principle would not only be unjust, it would also be a political mistake. Market-oriented development should be also implemented in the less productive areas. The fact that projects in remote areas have been selected as part of the PHDP is encouraging.

4.5 Is the agenda needs-driven or donor-driven?

The agenda of donors strongly influences their intervention strategy and subsequently programme design. The definition of the aid agenda remains very much linked to the political agenda of the donor organisations.

Field realities, political agendas, visibility issues, the lack of flexibility of some donors and the whole set of difficulties attached to fieldwork partly explain some of the missed opportunities for taking into account how needs have changed and the reasons why certain activities are not open to change. The lack or absence of liaison and coordination between the different programmes in the agricultural sector, even when they occasionally 'belong' to same donor, may create overlaps.

There is a lack of consistency and relevance within the sector policy and strategies, which are not taken into consideration correctly or are sometimes completely overlooked.

4.6 Early warning systems: insufficient political utilisation

Early warning systems related to "natural disasters" have existed now for many years and are becoming more sophisticated. The most sophisticated and reliable systems are, until now, those targeting specifically climatic disasters (droughts, floods, etc.) as well as those focusing on locust infestations. In Afghanistan, many agencies such as FEWS, the VAM and the FAM have been working on early warning systems with some success. However, as for the response to the drought in 2006, political agendas and the slow response capacity of the ministry and donors slowed down the decision-making processes. Coordination for disaster management should be improved at the national and provincial levels, particularly between ministries, and between ministries and international organisations. There is room for improvement, at least in the way pre-crisis information is collected and used before the disaster strikes.

4.7 Towards a shared and inclusive development

Certain regions (southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan), particularly those with high levels of insecurity and/or poppy production, receive larger amounts of donor resources than other regions²⁹. In fact some areas are still not completely secure and might become increasingly insecure if overlooked in major investment initiatives. Some of these areas bordering the rogue southern provinces need to be supported in terms of development in order to prevent the spread of frustration which leads to insecurity and prevents peace building. Indeed, by marginalising secure regions this may give the impression that violence or poppy production will automatically lead to an increased commitment in funding, triggering perverse incentives. Development efforts and long-term strategies should be more fairly balanced across the country and not skewed towards areas with high productive potentials, significant poppy production or insecurity problems. Moreover, most of the aid committed to insecure areas cannot be put to use in an effective manner due to security constraints, or is being delivered in a questionable manner through military force. Meanwhile, sustained development in other areas is threatened because of a lower commitment from donors. Nearly USD200 million have been injected into Helmand province and yet security incidents and poppy production soared in 2006 in this province. There are no 'quick fix solutions' in Afghanistan, particularly where vulnerability, opium and military operations are taking place.

Whilst most of the national and international community recognise the importance of achieving a firm and committed development presence in southern Afghanistan, it seems that the environment for long-term development is not yet in place. *"The trend of withdrawing from 'more' stable areas where development achievements are just beginning to bear fruit to*

²⁹ This does not call into question the fact that donors give priority to the richest areas in the North.

*focus on such instable target zones is at best a short term strategy that will only bring frustration and undermine confidence in both the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community. It may also more widely impact upon the enabling environment for both aid and private sector development. Instead, areas where rural development successes are being made should be linked strategically to more challenging provinces.*³⁰

Moreover, development outputs should be shared among the Afghan population. The worsening situation in the south of the country calls into question the relevance of the strategies that have been chosen until now. How should aid operations be run today? Does the remote control strategy put in place by many stakeholders ensure quality service delivery? Is the militarised option (PRTs) the only alternative? If so, are PRTs relevant in the north of the country?

4.8 Building capacity and increasing links

The **still low capacity of technical ministries** at the central, provincial and district levels is widely recognised as one of the key constraints in the transition between emergency, rehabilitation and development. Many NGOs underlined the fact that they have difficulties in getting their staff to change their ways of thinking when designing or implementing projects. As we stated earlier, for many years, Afghan agronomists were trained to believe that the technical aspects of agriculture were the most important. The “extension reflex”, capacity building, research and evaluation processes are now receiving more attention from both aid actors and donors.

Finally, there seem to be large overlaps in the areas of intervention of the three main ministries in charge of “rural affairs”, i.e. the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Energy and Water. “Who to turn to” for discussions on projects and problem-solving will remain a recurrent question for NGOs until a **clear Terms of Reference** (TOR) for these ministries are issued and disseminated to the aid community.

4.9 Supporting quality M&E systems

New tools and methods need to be introduced and staff need to be trained in how to use them. The farming system method (used in Groupe URD farming system’s studies), which is used to analyse the main dynamics and opportunities in an agrarian system, presents some interesting advantages compared to the livelihood framework. Historical trends are carefully studied thanks to interviews with the elders and this is particularly useful for assessing (i) the conditions that are required for these systems to regenerate themselves, and (ii) the sustainability of the agriculture they are linked to. Just as in the livelihood framework, the farming system analysis method looks at assets and constraints but also includes a careful examination of technical aspects (e.g. cropping calendar, cropping system, tools used, etc.).

Having work for many years in an emergency context where one of the most important elements was the capacity of NGOs to react quickly and delivery items (food or non food items), this has undoubtedly prompted some NGOs to apply methods based on quick impacts. Today, most of them are aware that these methods are no longer adapted to the current situation. They are aware that neither the communities themselves, nor the government nor the donors are going to favour these methods in the future. Many NGOs are trying to include better quality assessment and M&E systems in their programmes. Most NGOs have developed a **monitoring system** whereby checklists are used to review activities. In most cases, the collected data is mainly quantitative or, when they are qualitative, they do not really seek out the real impacts on people’s wellbeing as they do not have a comprehensive view of how people lived before the intervention. Many questions are

³⁰ In “Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan at a crossroad”, *ACBAR briefing paper*, Nov 2006

being overlooked, for instance, how does this project respond to demonstrated needs? NGOs are monitoring the results whereas in some cases the relevance and the real impact needs to be called into question. However, it is often unclear how the collected information is analysed and fed back into the decision-making process. The lesson learning process is often quite weak. Despite data collection and the use of monitoring checklists, concrete action is not always taken to tackle the issues. For example, many studies have shown that wheat seed distribution was not always relevant for the poorest farmers and was not effective at discouraging farmers from poppy production. Despite this fact, many agencies and NGOs continue to distribute wheat seeds without any precise assessment of people's needs and of the possible impacts of such a programme. This is also the donors' responsibility to support NGOs in improving the quality of their M&E systems by allocating funds to NGOs to allow them to implement such a process.

ANNEXE 1: Main presentation of the FAO programs in Afghanistan

Regular programs

- **Afghanistan Variety and Seed Industry Development Project**

This project will build upon the achievements and lessons of a three year EC funded “Strengthening National Seed Production Capacity in Afghanistan” project implemented by FAO since January 2003 (Phase I). This first phase has enhanced capacity in the production of quality declared seed, which will be upgraded to certified seed production supported by effective seed industry regulation in the follow-up phase. This next phase will also take account of other complementary seed activities undertaken in the country so as to ensure effective donor coordination and avoid duplication of efforts.

While past efforts in the seed sector have been focused on relief needs, the restoration of a civil government in Afghanistan now makes it necessary to support re-organization of the seed industry in a more coherent and sustainable way with appropriate rules and regulations. Since the public sector has little financial resources and limited institutional capacity to organize independent modern seed production at the moment, the government has made the policy decision that this function will be undertaken largely by the private sector, while the state retains responsibility for regulation of the seed industry, for which appropriate institutional arrangements and trained staff should be put in place.

The project’s overall objective is “contributing to higher productivity of major staple crops in Afghanistan and to higher food security, particularly in rural areas” and its immediate objective or purpose is “improving access of farmers to quality certified seeds and planting material (of major staple crops)”. To achieve these objectives, the project will implement appropriate activities to generate outputs in four key areas namely strengthening the Agricultural Research Institute of Afghanistan (ARIA) to effectively develop new varieties and produce breeder seed, enhancing the capacity of the Improved Seed Enterprise (ISE) to produce foundation seed of newly released and popular existing varieties, establishing a National Seed Board (NSB) with affiliated bodies (Variety Release Committee, Seed Certification Agency and Seed/Plant Health Inspectorate) as apex institutions for coordinating seed industry functions, and putting in place an appropriate system for commercializing quality certified seed to farmers. NSB will also serve as the Steering Committee for this project. A part of the process of putting an effective system in place will be the privatization of ISE into a viable commercial entity as well as the seed producing operations of partner NGOs. To facilitate this transition, these new institutional arrangements will be supported by technical assistance from the project, particularly in the form of training that will be aimed at creating awareness and raising marketing efficiency. In terms of impact, this project would serve its purpose when there is finally a clear evidence that policy and regulatory reforms have helped in creating and strengthening an institutional environment conducive for sustainable release of new varieties by the public sector, when the capacity of public and private sectors are strengthened such that they respectively can produce breeder and foundation seed on a sustainable basis, when private enterprises can participate effectively in certified seed production and marketing, when the seed industry is well regulated such that producers, sellers and buyers of seed are aware of the seed policy and seed law and abide by them, when an increasing proportion of farmers are willing to pay for quality seed at commercial prices, and when capacity building of government counterpart staff results in a cadre of capable and experienced seed professionals in the Ministry of Agriculture.

- **NFSP: National Food security program**

The development objective of SPFS is to ensure adequate supply of food for the population.

- Increase household’s diet diversity

- Increase average cash income from livestock and crop sales
- Facilitate transition from subsistence to market agriculture – national food security and household food security are complemented
- Extend area under irrigation
- Provide exits from agriculture to provincial and district towns through agro-processing
- improve water management;
- develop an effective modality of grassroots organizations.

- **Household Food Security, Nutrition & Livelihoods**

The main objective is to improve the food security and nutritional situation of vulnerable households in Afghanistan by

Diversification of food production

- Income generation, especially for women
- Dissemination and promotion of food preservation and storage techniques
- Improving choice and use of available foods
- Supporting and disseminating food security and nutrition interventions

Integrating nutrition objectives and activities in agricultural and food security programmes

- Capitalizing and disseminating lessons learnt for successful programming
- Piloting new interventions, disseminating successful ones
- Providing technical training on improving food production and use
- Supporting and disseminating food security and nutrition interventions

Nutrition education

- Developing nutrition education materials and messages adapted to Afghanistan
- Strengthen knowledge on food beliefs and practices in partnership with research organizations
- Providing training to implementing agencies on nutrition education (government, NGOs)
- Integrating nutrition education in key national and local programmes (in particular women's literacy and schools through schools gardens)

Capacity building and raising awareness on gender (close collaboration with the MoWA, MRRD, MOPH)

- Field visits to projects
- Seminars and training sessions
- Study tours

Advocacy

- Lobbying within MAAHF (seminar series, work on Master Plan, regular meetings with officials)
- Close collaboration with other FAO projects
- Facilitate collaboration between MAAHF and other ministries: MRRD, MOPH, MOWA
- Participation in Joint UN Programmes

- **Managing biodiversity for sustainable food security and nutrition in Afghanistan**

Overall objective: To improve Afghan communities' nutrition, food security and livelihoods through effective use and conservation of local biodiversity.

Specific objectives:

1. To preserve local biodiversity and manage in a sustainable way species with high nutritional and / or commercial value
2. To increase consumption of local food species with high nutritional value by Afghan households

3. To increase the income of food insecure households increased through the commercialization of local natural resources

- **SALEH (Sustainable Agricultural Livelihoods in the Eastern Hazarajat)**

The main objective of the project is to improve the livelihoods and well-being of the people of the Eastern Hazarajat on a sustainable basis

- To develop capacity for community-level action to improve agricultural livelihoods and resources management;
- To improve food security, income generation and employment opportunities and resource utilization through community-based action;
- To promote and support planning, information dissemination and replication of lessons for improving agricultural livelihoods and natural resource management, focused initially at the provincial and district levels

- **FAAHM Project**

The main objective is to identify, collate, and organize data on agriculture, rural markets, food security and nutrition, in collaboration with UN, MRRD, Central Statistics Office and others

Establish a food security database within the framework of AIMS.

- Conduct food security monitoring and assessment and price data collection activities (APR)
- Conduct of Provincial Agricultural Survey in six provinces in May 2005 (Survey Report)
- Prepare Annual Crop and Food Supply Report
- Capacity building through the conduct of on-the-job and formal training
- Prepare project proposal for a follow-up project
- Cooperation with MRRD/Central Statistics Office for the conduct of various Surveys
- Conduct an international seminar on Agriculture and Food Security in Afghanistan (February 2006)
- Weekly price data for wheat, wheat flour and imported wheat for 32 provinces by radio;
- Monthly price data (17 commodities, all provinces);
- B-monthly Agriculture Prospects Report covering agricultural prospects and price. (Example)
- Occasional papers on issues of production, cost of production, price, stocks;
- Ad-hoc supply of information/data to users;
- Support formulation of plan and projects related to food security, planning, marketing economics and statistics.

- **Development of Integrated Dairy Schemes**

(Kabul, Parwan, Logar, Balkh and Kunduz)

The main goal of this project is to improve food security in Afghanistan by raising the productive capacity of the national dairy sector through the development of integrated model dairy schemes.

- Daily collection of morning milk through village centers
- Monitoring and recording quantity and quality
- Transport by vehicles of the scheme
- Weekly payments to the farmers
- Payment of commission to milk collectors
- Central processing in one center for each scheme
- Processing according to demands of the location, season and cost
- Sale through own shops (Kabul) and shops on commission basis (Mazar and Kunduz)

- **Alternative Agricultural Livelihoods: (AALP)**

The goal of the Project is to contribute to the sustainable elimination of illicit opium poppy cultivation by 2013 throughout the country, in line with the Afghanistan's National Drug Control Strategy.

The purpose of the Project is to contribute to national policy through the development of nationally owned alternative livelihood strategies and action plans.

The Project has the following six inter-related components:

1. Institutional Platform, Operational Mechanisms, Diagnostic Research and Analysis
2. Capacity building at community level
3. Capacity building at national level and at provincial and district level in pilot provinces
4. Farm and off-farm livelihoods diversification activities implemented in pilot provinces
5. Dissemination of Lessons Learned
6. Strategy and Policy Advice

- **Emergency and rehabilitation Unit (ERU)**

The main objective is to improve food security and incomes of farmers in rural communities.

- To reduce post-harvest losses through provision of grain and food storage facilities.
- To enhance local technical capacity to construct small-medium capacity metallic silos through transfer of improved know-how to local artisans.
- Supply households/associations with locally fabricated silos
- Vulnerable Households (IDPs and Returnees) benefit from Silos produced to store grains.
- 220 artisans acquired know-how, trained and equipped to manufacture improved silos.
- Enhanced Marketing Capacity for Grain producing households and Associations (i.e. ability to store grain in good condition for few months before selling, thus earning better profit e.g. in winter).
- Distribution of seed and fertilizer to vulnerable households for the Autumn 2005
- Reintegration of ex-combatants in civil life by provision of agricultural inputs and technical knowledge
- Locust and sunn pest campaigns
- Greening Afghanistan Initiative (GAIN) (cf box above)
- Provision of storage facilities to vulnerable households and rural communities
- Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Project: EIRP (Rehabilitation of Irrigation Schemes – 280 000 ha, Rehabilitation of 167 Hydrological and 30 Meteorological Stations, Feasibility studies of 8 major irrigation schemes and reservoirs, Capacity building.)

- **The Greening of Afghanistan Initiative (GAIN)** is a joint UN programme that aims to improve Afghanistan's environment. GAIN was launched by FAO with the support from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), WFP, UNOPS, IOM, UNEP, UNDP. The objective is to help widows and other vulnerable groups establish their own nurseries, encourage school children to adopt trees and support communities in large-scale rehabilitation activities. Seven provincial training centre nurseries have already been established and are expected to produce over 3.5 million saplings per year (Herat, Bamyan Takhar and Mazar-e-Sharif). The main purposes of the GAIN project are to : Increase reforestation around schools and communities:

- Building local capacity
- Assist the most vulnerable populace
- Develop a network of nurseries production to supply much needed planting material
Facilitate the development of private forestry sector

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- Health, Bousquet (oct 2005)
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