



# NABDP BENEFICIARY ASSESSMENT FIELDWORK SYNTHESIS

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## Acronyms

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ASOP	Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme
CDC	Community Development Council
CDP	Community Development Plan
CLDD	Community Lead Development Department
CNTF	Counter Narcotics Trust Fund
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDP	District Development Plan
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Facilitating Partner
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HARDP	Helmand Agricultural and Rural Development Programme
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
LIDD	Local Institution Development Department
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Programme
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PDP	Provincial Development Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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# Introduction

There had never been a full-fledged, formal outreach program from Kabul to the country's other provinces partially because of frequent interrupting conflicts preventing the central government from implementing a thorough unification strategy. With the re-entrance of the international community in Afghanistan in 2011, however, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GiROA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) placed a renewed focus on developing a strong relationship between the central government and local governance bodies at the village, district and provincial levels. This change produced the sub-national governance structures in place in Afghanistan today.

This report, which was commissioned by the UNDP Evaluation Office, highlights major programming achievements and issues present in the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP). The *Samuel Hall* field teams gathered key observations from male and female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of 43 sites throughout Afghanistan. The review teams limited their assessment to the NABDP program, determining the relevance, usefulness and service delivery quality of representative sites. As the Afghan government discusses the possibility of using the NABDP as a base for formal district-level governance structures and as the UNDP reviews its development work in Afghanistan, the assessment attempts to shed some light on citizens' impressions of the program as well as the program's direct benefit to beneficiaries.

## I. Local Governance in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has historically been a highly centralised state, especially since the nineteenth century, with only notional power held by the politically appointed few at the provincial level. As highlighted by Hamish Nixon, "*state authority has been highly centralised in the monarchy and ministries, while its reach throughout the country has been limited and mediated through customary law, tribal alliances and religious leadership*".<sup>1</sup> During the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime in the 1980s, a form of *de facto* decentralisation began to occur as a class of military commanders started exercising varying degrees of autonomy over large parts of the country. The conflict with the Soviet regime further weakened that reach by empowering regional and local strongmen who gained prominence in the anti-Soviet resistance and the internecine struggles that followed. The Afghan governance context has thus historically been characterised by formal centralisation combined with *de facto* local fragmentation. The central government's reach has historically lacked strong networks outside of Kabul and other major cities, leaving little room for formal governance institutions at the provincial, district and village levels to develop.

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<sup>1</sup> Nixon H., *The 'Subnational Governance' Challenge and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance*, in Martine van Biljert and Sari Kouvo (ed.), *Snapshots of an Intervention, the Unlearned Lessons of Afghanistan's Decade of Assistance (2001-11)*, The Afghanistan Analysts Network, pp.117-123.

More recently, the Bonn Agreement<sup>2</sup> was established upon the core provisions of the extremely centralist 1964 constitution and strongly reaffirmed the key political role of the Afghan Interim Authority. The 2004 constitution confirmed that the political architecture of the country was that of a unitary state, divided into 34 provinces and 398 districts, with subnational administrations but no decentralised governments and no separate budgets at the provincial or district levels.<sup>3</sup>

Successive frameworks for reconstruction and development – including the 2002 National Development Framework and the interim and full Afghanistan National Development Strategy in 2006 and 2008 – emphasised improving governance at all levels but failed to provide a coherent reform agenda. Instead, disparate initiatives proceeded with no clear direction for the long-term roles of subnational administration<sup>4</sup>.

Even if the UNDP had no particular mandate in supporting the Afghan government in its efforts to establish district-level government systems, the organisation naturally stepped forward as the main international partner. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) acted as the primary national actor – through the internationally funded and ministry administered National Solidarity Program (NSP), at the village level, and National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) at the district level.

## II. Rationale behind the National Area Based Development Program (NABDP)

**Village-Level Local Governance, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP):** In 2003, the MRRD, in joint partnership with the World Bank, established the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), largely hailed as a successful approach to local development planning and delivery. It represented the first time in Afghanistan’s history that an ambitious nationwide and community-driven development programme reached local villages, enhancing local capacity and organizing semi-traditional governance systems. MRRD employees traveled to local villages and held elections to establish Community Development Councils (CDCs). The NSP’s CDC structure was developed specifically in order to:

- Mirror the traditional Afghan shuras, and
- Implement financially backed development projects, with a particular focus on basic infrastructure projects with clear community benefits.

At present, the NSP and its facilitating partners (FPs – very often national and international NGOs) have established CDCs in 361 out of 398 districts, operating in more than 27,200 (95% of) Afghan villages. The NSP’s widespread presence in conjunction with the establishment of provincial councils and the central government revealed key gap at the district-level, an opening that led to the establishment of the NABDP program.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Reestablishment of Permanent Government Institutions’ Bonn, United Nations, 5 December 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004, Arts 137–140.

<sup>4</sup> Hamish Nixon, ‘Subnational Statebuilding in Afghanistan’, Synthesis Paper Series, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul April 2008.

**District-Level Governance, the National Area Based Development Program (NABDP):** While the NABDP was established a year before the NSP, its role was initially limited to immediate recovery support, economic regeneration projects. It was not commissioned to develop district-level governance structures until the gap became evident. It utilized an area-based approach, which generally targets a select portion of a greater region (*See Box 1 below*). NABDP, with its established structure and relatively high capacity, was chosen as the implementer of district-level programming. At the district level, the NABDP has created over 300 District Development Assemblies (DDAs) with members elected from among the CDCs. The third phase of funding for the expansion of the NABDP includes an explicit mention of institutionalizing DDAs through ‘expanding the scope of their role in local governance,’ through conflict resolution, women’s empowerment and a ‘social development role.’<sup>5</sup>

### **Box 1. Area-Based Approach**

Area-based initiatives were chosen by the MRRD and UNDP as the structure for district-level development. The idea was to build on the long-time legitimacy of pre-existing informal socio-political mappings, to identify relevant areas of operations. Afghan communities have long developed local shuras typically consisting of village – and sometimes district – leaders in distinct geographical areas. Stakeholders implemented a bottom-up approach to identify and define villages. NSP worked with government and international partners to travel to Afghanistan’s villages, defining villages according to the people’s own differentiation of one area from another.

Area-based programming is generally considered to implement a ‘bottom up’ approach to increase confidence and capacity to participate in the community and reach the most deprived areas. It further prioritizes the unique needs of each community, emphasizing local and flexible problem solving instead of implementing blanket programs and mobilizing the resources of a single community towards a solution.

Critics often note that the “[m]ost deprived people do not live in the most deprived areas and will be missed by most of the targeted programmes.”<sup>6</sup> The NABDP, however, seems to remain exempt from the criticism given that it aims to be implemented in all areas of Afghanistan. Thus, while the NABDP organizes its beneficiaries by areas, it does not exclude any areas. Its approach is entirely organizational, more in line with traditional government structures than aid programs.

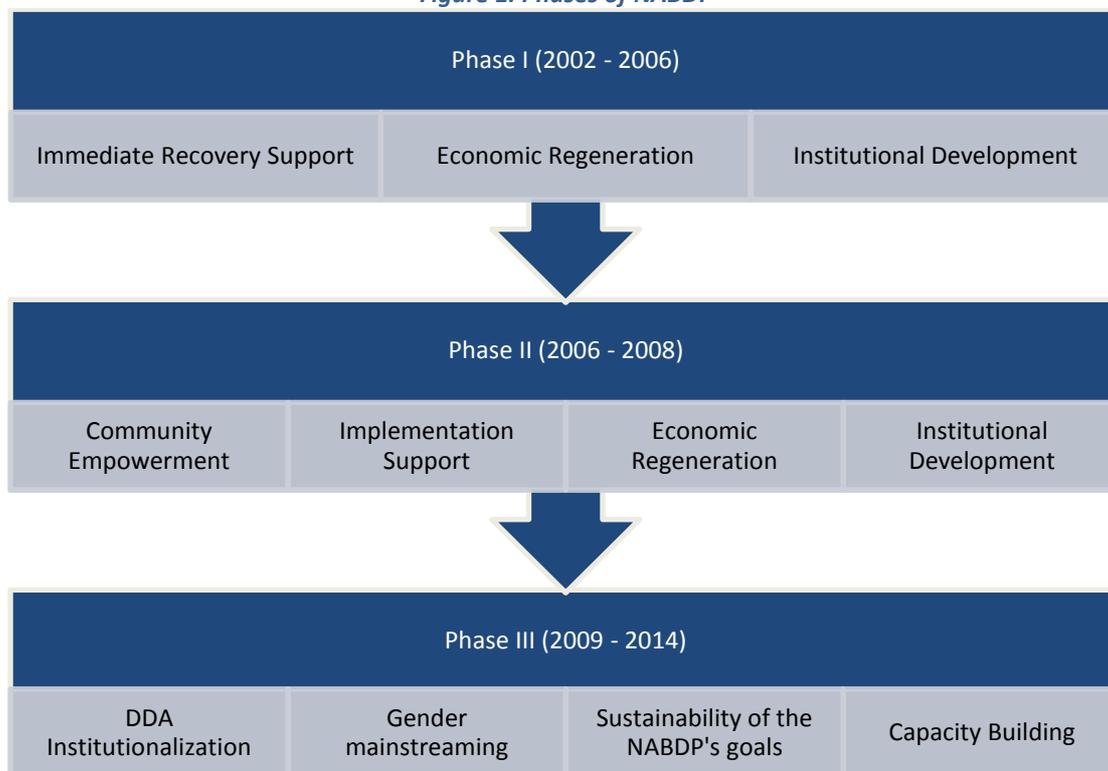
The program was divided into three key phases (*see Figure 1*). Phase I represented the original aims of the NABDP, focusing on MRRD’s institutional capacity, quick-impact projects primarily implemented by facilitating partners (FPs) and local economic regeneration programming and research. Projects were effective yet unconnected to other projects or a greater system. Given that the NABDP was already implementing local rural development (on a larger scale than that NSP) under Phase I, the GiROA and its international partners felt that it was a convenient implementer for its district-level governance initiatives. The NABDP’s role was thus broadened under Phase II, which instituted a more strategic framework to the developing programs. Phase III, currently in progress, focuses on the long-term goals of the DDA system, providing the support needed to create sustainable and

<sup>5</sup> National Area Based Development Program (NABDP), Executive Summary. Available at: <http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/About%20Us.htm>

<sup>6</sup> O’Keeffe, B. *Multi-level Governance and Area-Based Development*, Irish Social Sciences Platform, April 2009.

capable local governance institutions. A general description of the three phases is provided below:

*Figure 1. Phases of NABDP*



In developing the DDA's structure, the NABDP thus replicated the NSP's semi-formal approach and used it as a basis for its own development. In most districts, NABDP used NSP's database to cluster several CDCs; after bringing together representatives of a CCDC (Clustered Community Development Cluster), the NABDP held an election for a 30-member District Development Assembly (DDA). The DDA was thus supposed to represent the main district-level governance actor.

The issue is further complicated by a constitutional requirement for the establishment of district-level governance authorities commonly referred to as District Councils. Article 140 states: *"In order to organize activities involving people and provide them with the opportunity to actively participate in the local administration, councils are set up in districts and villages in accordance with the provisions of the law. **Members of these councils are elected by the local people through free, general, secret and direct elections for a period of three years.**"*<sup>7</sup> Theoretically, Districts Councils must thus be elected directly by the people in elections with IEC involvement; however, the IEC has repeatedly stated that it does not have the capacity to organize district-level elections, leaving current programs to inhabit an informal grey area.

DDAs were designed with the intention of creating a base for the development of District Councils. Stakeholders hoped that DDAs could act as interim District Councils until the IEC had the capacity to organize and supervise elections. While aspects of the NABDP programme such as the three-year long terms of office and development responsibilities

<sup>7</sup> Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004, Art 140. Emphasis added.

aligned well with the proposal District Councils, advocates were faced with two primary criticisms:

1. The lack of IEC involvement in the election of DDA members; and
2. The lack of direct election by the people.

As mentioned, DDAs were established from a cluster of CDCs. DDA election candidates and voters were therefore limited to CDC members. Non-CDC members of the local community were not included in the selection process of DDAs, thereby not meeting the constitutional requirement for a “direct” election<sup>8</sup>. Unlike District Governors, DDAs are not formal government institutions and its members are not government employees or representatives; however, as will be discuss in the report, many DDA members expressed a desire to be integrated into the formal political system and the MRRD has begun issuing DDA identification cards with a ministerial logo.

### III. Institutional and contextual challenges

In recent years, various stakeholders established and/or supported different district-level actors, including the district governor, DDAs, Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP Councils), Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and at the village level, CDCs. The objectives of those different actors were to harness the traditional authority of village elders in an attempt to either increase the legitimacy of the government, in terms of ASOP, or ensure the accountability and acceptance of local development projects, as both the CDCs and DDAs are expected to do. DDAs were thus established alongside several other district actors, often with overlapping and ambiguous responsibilities.

In August 2007, the newly created Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) assumed responsibility from the Ministry of Interior for the offices of provincial governors, district governors and mayoralties in an attempt *‘to consolidate peace and stability, achieve development and equitable economic growth and to achieve improvements in service delivery through just, democratic processes and institutions of good governance at subnational level’*. In addition, to the two flagship community development programmes of MRRD, IDLG has also established district level councils or *shuras* under the USAID funded ASOP numbering approximately 112 across the country. ASOP specifically focuses on insecure areas by ‘electing a 30-50 person community council at the district level to involve traditional tribal *shuras* and religious leaders in government structures.’<sup>9</sup> There is a degree of overlap as well, as ASOP *shuras* have a loosely defined mandate to communicate the district’s needs in terms of development, echoing that of the DDAs, and no clearly articulated links with formal institutional. Unlike the DDAs that are a voluntary organisation, members of the ASOP *shura* receive a stipend of between US\$120 to \$180 and are elected via a gathering of influential – albeit not necessarily representative – individuals.

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<sup>8</sup> Likewise, DDAs often suffer from a clear lack of representativeness, as: 1) they are not elected by the people directly; 2) their goal and objective are not clearly understood and differentiated from the ones of other formal or informal similar provincial or local bodies.

<sup>9</sup> USAID, Afghan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), available at: [http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/USAID/Activity/167/Afghanistan\\_Social\\_Outreach\\_Program\\_ASOP](http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/USAID/Activity/167/Afghanistan_Social_Outreach_Program_ASOP)

In addition, subnational governance became a focus for military and civilian personnel in the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) bases as they spread throughout the country from 2003 to assist in extending the authority of the Afghan government. Spurred by a lack of government responsiveness, outreach or services as well as a newly evident insurgency, PRTs relied on Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) or ‘capacity-building’ of local officials to try to generate local progress. These efforts often appeared to have as much a force protection, counter-insurgency or domestic political purpose as any sustainable reform agenda.<sup>6</sup> In addition to locally-contracted development spending, US PRTs spent largely via the military Commander’s Emergency Response Fund (CERP), while other nations’ PRTs generally had fewer resources. Initially modest, these initiatives grew dramatically in size and quantity: in 2010 approximately US\$1 billion was appropriated for CERP, equivalent to the previous nine years combined. While there has been some coordination with provincial governors, in general these initiatives have tended to replace government capacity rather than build it, create unsustainable infrastructure, and undermine strategic planning and prioritisation by the government or other subnational actors (like the UNDP funded NABDP).

There is consequently notable overlap between different actors’ responsibilities, which creates space for tension between actors as well as local confusion about the actors’ different roles. Thus far, tensions generally have only been reported between DDAs and the DGs as well as between DDAs and DCCs. This lack of clarity regarding the district-level actors – in conjunction with the ambiguous legal status of DDAs and DCCs – has produced a complex local governance landscape in Afghanistan that leave DDAs somewhere in the midst of overlapping institutions.

Until the IEC has the capacity to organize and supervise elections for DCs, the following actors function as district-level authorities:

**Table 1. Actor Mapping**

<i>Actor Overseer</i>	Type of Election	Salary Provider	Main Responsibilities
<i>District Governor President’s Office</i>	Appointed	Provincial Administration offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service delivery</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Coordination with provincial line ministries</li> </ul>
<i>DDAs MRRD, UNDP</i>	(1) Through CCDs (2) MRRD-appointed with community input	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty reduction</li> <li>• Livelihood improvement</li> <li>• Developing local institutions, rural energy, economy and productive rural infrastructure</li> <li>• Natural resource management</li> <li>• Coordination with CDCs and PCs</li> </ul>
<i>DCCs IDLG</i>	Appointed on the basis of traditional structures	USAID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shura</i> relations</li> <li>• Local government capacity building</li> <li>• Reintegration and security</li> </ul>
<i>Traditional shuras None</i>	Varies	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service delivery</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>

If institutional mis-arrangements and overlapping structures seriously hamper the functioning and impact of the DDAs, other contextual obstacles remain.

- **Factional Influence:** The structural weaknesses in sub-national governance across Afghanistan is not solely the lack of physical and human capacity, but also the result of influential individuals and political factions, who, at times, exercise an inordinate degree of influence over the system. The effects of the factional domination of sub-national governance, despite what was perceived as a 'necessary evil' in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Taliban Regime, have severely undermined accountable and responsive governance, through the corruption of the bureaucracy, executive and judiciary and the weakening of the nascent subnational institutions via creating parallel lines of authority in isolation from the formal governance structure and lines of authority.
- **Disparity in capacity and mandate:** Sub-national governance programmes, such as DDA *shuras*, also suffer from uneven attention and a wide disparity in capacity, frequency of meetings, mandated tasks and, perhaps most importantly, their links to formal subnational institutions. Absent clearly articulated institutional links and a transparent understanding by the public and government officials of the role of DDAs, then they run the risk of being viewed as temporary non-representative structures, lacking the authority or capacity to deliver their mandate.
- **Absence of perceived legitimacy:** In contrast to a sustained provincial focus, the belated attention afforded to governance at the district level ensured that perceptions of governance in the provinces were largely negative, which continues to impact on the legitimacy of the state and the efficiency of DDAs.
- **Lack of capacity and basic equipment:** A poorly educated workforce, a sclerotic bureaucracy, absenteeism, the absence of dedicated buildings, widespread corruption and a general inability to fulfil basic government services were but some of the complaints that have fuelled these perceptions.
- **Problems with communication, access, and security:** Communication and support between the districts and the provincial capital remains extremely problematic in the larger provinces over issues of physical access, but also a lack of resources to resupply departments and perform even basic monitoring. The issue of communication and monitoring is not solely a result of distance, as in Badakhshan, but also due to insecurity – and not only in Southern or Eastern provinces.

#### IV. Structure of the report

The report is divided into six distinct sections and structured as follows. After the introduction, the second section provides a description of the methodology used. The third and fourth sections of the report focus on the District Development Assemblies (DDAs) and District Development Plans (DDPs). Based on the existing literature and the interviews we conducted (with key informant interviewees as well as in the 42 surveyed sites), this section will briefly describe the history of the DDAs and DDPs in the country, their geographical distribution as well as their characteristics. The fifth section encompasses all the profiles of the sites surveyed in the districts of the provinces of Badakhshan, Badghis, Balkh, Helmand, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, and Paktia; each field visit allowed the review team to collect empirical information and evaluate: i) the selection process; ii) the implementation, and; iii) the sustainability of a project, while assessing the perception of communities towards their local DDA. The last section of the report will concentrate on the main lessons learned for the NABDP and UNDP – as the review team identified some recurrent trends, issues, and trade-offs in most of the surveyed sites, even if the relatively reduced number of sites does not allow any definitive conclusion.



*Picture 1: Irrigation system in Nangarhar*

# Methodology

In order to inform the UNDP’s planned ADR, this limited Beneficiary Assessment was conducted from July to August 2012. The Assessment conducted extensive secondary desk research and key informant interviews, and focused on qualitative tools covering ten provinces. The team’s rigorous site selection process prioritized the geographic scope of the sites as well as the overall projects’ representativeness of the greater NABDP. However, a number of “special” sites and project types were also selected based on interest from the evaluation office. Special attention was given to projects benefiting women, children and/or youth whenever possible.

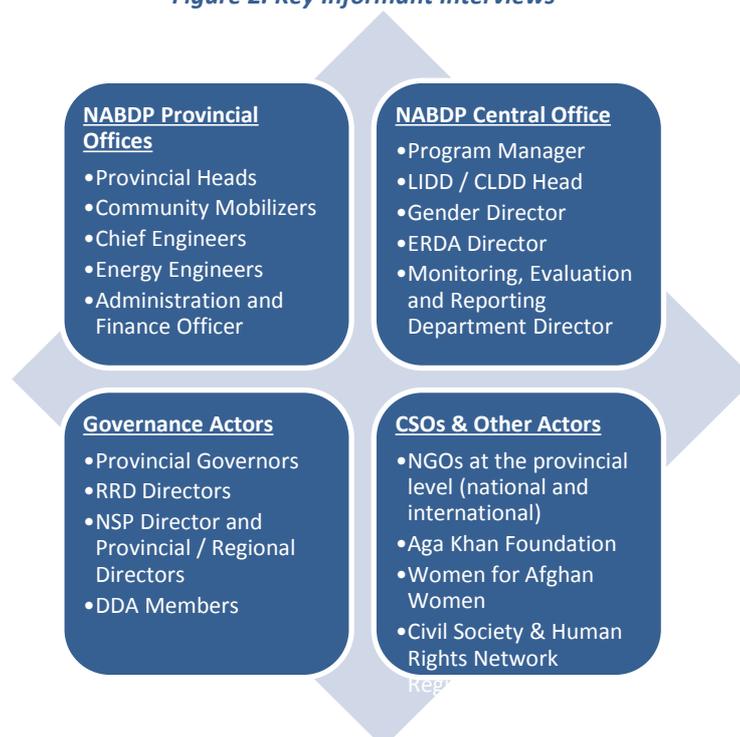
## I. Desk Research

The assessment team undertook an extensive literature review both on general local governance systems in Afghanistan as well as the specific NABDP system. The review included all relevant programme and project-specific documentation, such as internal MRRD and UNDP reports on observed sites. This review provided our assessment team with critical background data, allowing for a solid analytical frame of the key informant interviews and qualitative fieldwork.

## II. Key Informant Interviews

In every province, the assessment team conducted a number of key informant interviews with relevant NABDP representatives, governmental counterparts, and other stakeholders. The assessment team conducted the following interviews whenever possible:

*Figure 2. Key Informant Interviews*



### III. Qualitative Fieldwork

The primary purpose of this assessment was to provide a comprehensive perception analysis of NABDP projects from local officials and leaders, intended male and female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The team developed qualitative tools to thoroughly assess visited sites and districts, investigating the following key areas:

- Representation, Capacity, Perceptions and Sustainability of the District Development Assemblies (DDAs)
- Relevance, Usefulness, and Sustainability of the District Development Plans (DDPs)
- Planning Processes, Implementation and Usefulness of NABDP Projects
- Completed Projects' Impact, including relevance to the whole community, instances of alternative or non-use, sustainability and potential issues

In addition to the Key Informant Interviews with DDA and other officials, semi-structured Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held with five to seven female and male beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries at every site visited apart from a few exceptions noted in the Chapter 5. Exceptions occurred in two instances: (1) when a female or male beneficiary did not exist, and (2) when security precluded a female interviewer from visiting the site. For instance, when both local economic development projects visited in Helmand Province were exclusively targeting women, thereby inhibiting the possibility of a focus group with male beneficiaries. In total, the assessment team held 42 FGDs with male beneficiaries, 34 FGDs with female beneficiaries and 32 FGDs with non-beneficiaries. Field team leaders, who gave special focus to incorporating as representative sample of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries as possible, chose FGD Participants semi-randomly within the village. FGDs included women, children, recent migrants, youth and village elders.

*In total, the assessment team held more than 42 FGDs with male beneficiaries, 34 FGDs with female beneficiaries and 32 FGDs with non-beneficiaries.*

Field teams utilized comprehensive focus group guidelines that were piloted in Kabul Province prior to fieldwork. In addition to the standard team training and pilot test, experienced researchers provided an interactive training on focus group techniques and common errors.

### IV. Geographic Scope

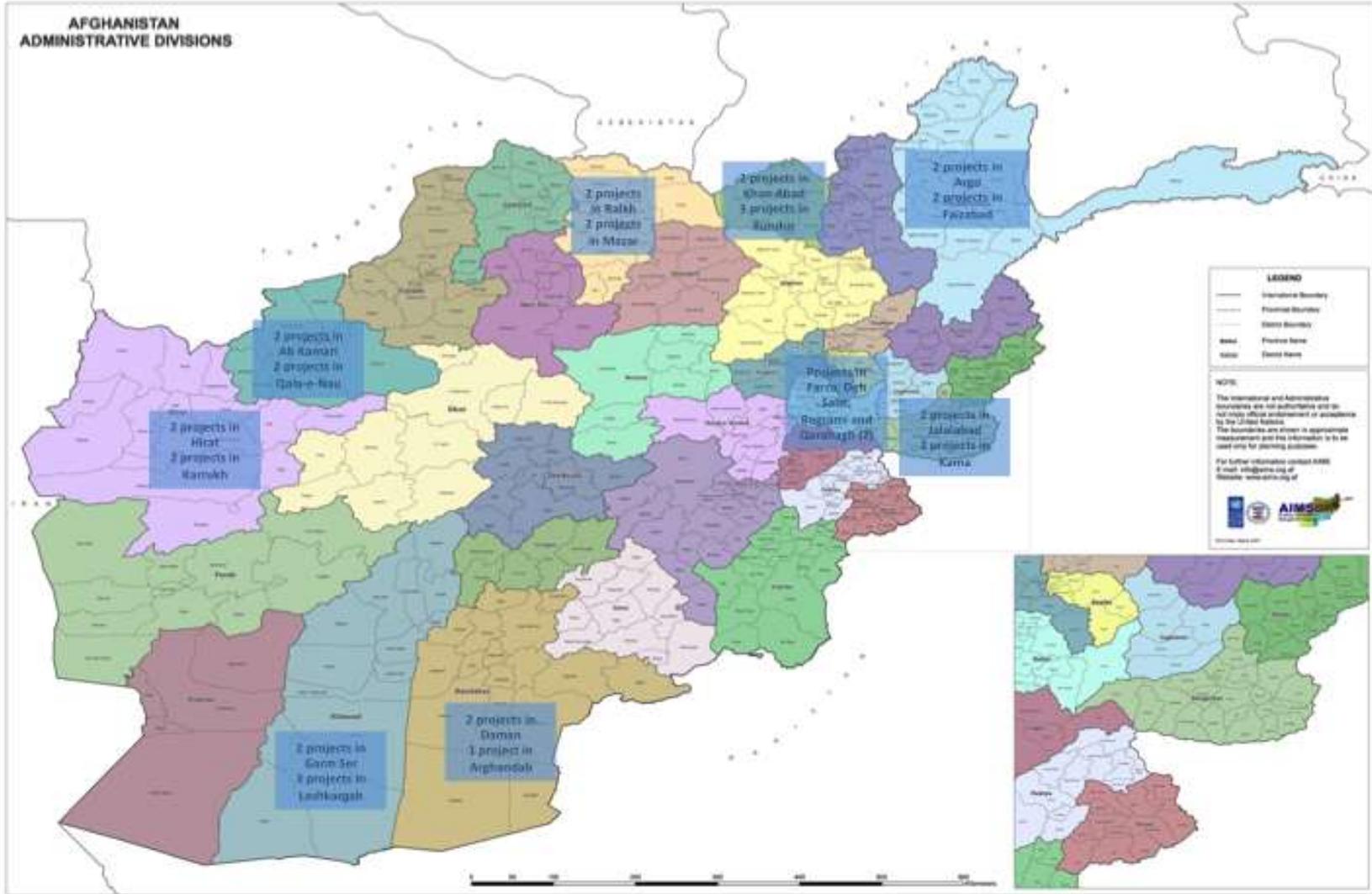
The assessment covered ten provinces across the country (see Table 3). The ten provinces were chosen based on their geographic diversity, presence of regional offices and concentration of completed projects. The field teams conducted the qualitative assessment in five of the six provinces (Kandahar, Badghis, Helmand, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Kabul) with the highest concentration of completed projects. The remaining province with a high concentration of completed projects, Uruzgan, was not visited due to heightened security concerns rendering our teams unable to safely conduct the assessment.

Within each province, field teams visited two sites in the provincial capital and two sites in a district. Within each area, the team attempted to visit one site near the district centre, and one site far from the district centre, providing as rigorously representative a geographic sample as possible.

Table 2. Geographic Scope

Region	Province	% of Completed Projects	District / City	Village
North	Balkh	3%	Balkh	Center Alquchi
			Mazar-e-Sharif	Center Center
	Kunduz	1%	Khan Abad	Dahana Deh Waran Musa Zai
			Kunduz City	Hazrath Sultan, Hichkly Uzbekia, Kanami Khord Chilan Mazar
			Badakhshan	5%
	Faizabad	Parna Kham, Layaba Qazi Abdul Aziz		
	East	Kabul	5%	Farza
Deh Sabz				Tara Khel
Bagrami				Center
Qarabagh				Center Paitawa
Nangarhar		7%	Kama	Kakal Bajawri Mirza Kheil 1-3
			Jalalabad	Anar Bagh Salam Poor
Paktia		2%	Sayyid Karam	Koz Sejenk Kander Khil
	Gardez		Dogh Abad Bala da	
West	Herat	2%	Karrukh	Majghandak 1 & 5, Haji Saeed Ahmad, Tahiriha Ab Rahman Qala-i-Bala
			Herat	Center Jalawardi
	Badghis	11%	Ab Kamari	Qaltak Aghak, Chashma Ghaibee, Dahanzaw, Laghari
			Qala-e-Nau	Houzi Khodai, Kalan Charbagh 1 & 2
South	Kandahar	21%	Daman	Tarnak Morghankecha
			Arghandab	Baba Sahib
	Helmand	10%	Garm Ser	Darwishan Meyanjasti
			Lashkargah	Dawlat Khan Koch Karti Lagan Tor Tang

**AFGHANISTAN  
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS**



## V. Sectoral Representation

The field team’s rigorous selection process also focused on providing a representative snapshot of the NABDP programme. The NABDP implements projects in four sectors: local economic development, rural energy development, natural resource management and productive rural infrastructure, with the latter two representing approximately 96% of completed projects.

The assessment team treated a “site” as a number of same infrastructure projects spread across a community (*manteqa*), cluster of villages or a district as a whole. For example, if the assessment team observed the construction of a canal in Deh Bazar and Deh Mulayan villages in Darayim district of Badakhshan, both projects were assessed as one “site” – not as separate sites – though they were located in different villages.

Adhering to the above site selection criteria, the following breakdown of project types was observed based on the resources shared among the various sectors, to ensure a fair and proportional representation of different activities delivered by NABDP:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Completed Projects</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<b>% of Budget Spent</b>	<b># of sites assessed</b>
<i>Productive Rural Infrastructure</i>	1,118	7,988,153	53%	24
<i>Natural Resources Management</i>	1,272	6,525,074	43%	12
<i>Rural Energy Development</i>	72	115,364	3%	4
<i>Local Economic Development</i>	46	272,240	2%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,508</b>	<b>14,900,831</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>42</b>

Given that the NABDP is the MRRD’s largest programme with the most expansive geographic scope, it has been used as a convenient implementer of “special” projects able to utilize the established NABDP structure. Special sites included four sites funded by the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups project and six sites funded by the Counter Narcotic Trust Fund. In addition to the 42 sectoral-based sites assessed, another two large-scale projects were also assessed to provide an in-depth insight on two key well-known projects:

- Aliceghan Refugee Housing Project in Kabul Province (Aliceghan)
- Helmand Agricultural and Rural Development Project (HARDP)

In total, 44 sites were visited by the field team.

## VI. Limitations and Constraints

The observed sites were further selected with the following limitations:

1. Religious and National Holidays
2. Project Status
3. Field Office Capacity
4. Insecurity and Road Access

**Religious and National Holiday:** The fieldwork was conducted from the end of July through August, largely coinciding with both the Islamic month of fasting, Ramadan, and concluding national holiday, Eid al-Fitr. Government and DDA offices, including those of the NABDP,

operated during limited hours and closed for a full week during Eid, thereby limiting key informant interviews as well as fieldwork.

**Project Status:** In order to fully assess the impact of the project to intended beneficiaries, only completed projects were considered with a single exception in Kunduz Province. The selected districts experienced recent violence during our field team's visit, eliminating the possibility of a safe assessment in most villages. A productive rural infrastructure project that was more than half completed was thus visited, providing useful information to the assessment team regarding the intended beneficiaries' projects expectations.

**Field Office Capacity:** Field offices' capacity placed restrictions on site selection. In Badakhshan and Kabul provinces, the head of the NABDP offices were recently changed to employees whose familiarity with the scope of provincial projects was limited. The following two primary issues resulted:

1. Field offices lacked information regarding projects completed prior to 2009, thus limiting the field teams to surveying recently completed projects.
2. Field offices lacked information about economic development projects. The research team attempted to survey at least five economic development projects, but these projects were often either not yet completed, completed in 2003 – 2005, or lacked sufficient information. Field offices were often unable to provide the location of economic development projects' beneficiaries, thus reducing the teams' ability to survey such projects.
3. Completed projects were not always correctly identified by the NABDP-provided site selection documentation and sometimes contained inaccurate information on the completed date, village / neighborhood of the project, as well as the nature of the project. For instance, two community centers were listed as completed projects in both the district center of Deh Sabz and in the village of Tara Khel. However, only one – not two – centers were built.

**Insecurity and Road Access:** Site selection was limited to villages of both relative security as well as road access. Proposed sites were consistently assessed prior to field visits, both externally as well as with NABDP field offices' support. This limited the field teams' intra-provincial travels in most provinces, particularly those located in the south. In Badakhshan, special consideration was given to the accessibility of remote districts. Several districts are unreachable within a day's drive or require travel through the Afghan-Tajik border and were, thus, eliminated as potential sites.

Additionally, the number of focus groups with female beneficiaries was slightly impacted by districts' security situation and traditional customs. The assessment team included a highly trained female focus group leader whenever possible. In areas where it was not safe for our female staff to travel and it was not possible to identify qualified local candidates, female focus groups were not conducted.

# District Development Assemblies

## Development of DDAs: From Local Assemblies to Government Agencies?

The development of the DDA between Phases I and II was more a choice of convenience than planned intention, with GIRoA and international community hoping to bridge the gap between provincial-level (line ministries and provincial councils) and village-level (CDCs) governance institutions. The NABDP vast district-level presence was one of the few representations of the government in the country's districts and served as a base to "support the establishment of an integrated planning and implementation framework."<sup>10</sup> This specific commitment to "community institutions" exhibited a strategic move towards sub-national governance, a large shift from the NABDP original and more limited programming.

The NABDP first entered Afghanistan's communities in late 2002, not facilitating the election of the first DDA until after the NSP had already established thousands of CDCs. NSP's introduction into the country's communities – in addition to the traditional informal governance structures such as shuras – paved the way for the eventual NABDP program's shift towards institutional development. NABDP adjusted its programming with the governance landscape strongly in mind, creating DDA's structure based on:

1. The NSP's CDC structure (in order to allow for a natural hierarchy from a CDC to DDA), and
2. The constitutional requirements for elected District Councils.

The NABDP thus created and structured DDAs with the intention of fully incorporating it as a government agency. DDA members would be government, salaried employees and DDAs would be recognized formal entities of the government's arm. The key to the DDA's next step of development is formalization and integration. While the NABDP has established 388 DDAs, some of which have lobbied for buildings for their membership of 11,737 individuals, they remain semi-formal governance institutions not integrated fully into the government.<sup>11</sup> A DDA falls directly under the MRRD's NABDP program, having little relation to other ministries unless it seeks it.

National and provincial-level NABDP staff as well as most DDA members interviewed advocated for the full incorporation of DDAs into the government, thereby broadening the current role and responsibilities of the DDA as well as the benefits DDA members receive. Reasons differed between various advocates. NABDP staff often stated a belief that the DDA's capacity extended far past infrastructure development, that the DDAs could do more than "just implementing projects" and were able to act as sources of conflict resolution within their communities as they *de facto* acted as the government's arm in the districts.<sup>12</sup> DDAs agreed but added that they were unable to do their work well because their lack of government resources. As elected volunteers, DDA members often highlighted the bias created among potential DDA membership due to the unpaid nature of their commitment. DDA members in Herat explained the DDA's male membership is almost entirely older

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<sup>10</sup> National Area-Based Development Programme: Phase 2 (2006-2008), United Nations Development Programme and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Fact Sheet, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, February 2012.

because young men have to work or go to school, precluding male youth involvement. Female DDA members in Kunduz further emphasized that, without any financial support, several of their members were unable to come to meetings. DDA members, particularly women without jobs, were unable to afford the carfare to the meetings, limiting their ability to get involved.

Nonetheless, while youth and women's active participation in the DDA was considered at stake by several DDA members, the field team emphasized that the youth and women already involved in the DDA and attending meetings were often sidelined regardless of their presence. Most DDA members requested government-issues cars, buildings and salaries, explaining most often that, without such resources, their work was impeded. Stakeholders, including some NABDP, did not all agree with the decision to integrate the DDA into the political system and formalize them with governmental resources. Interviews conducted with civil society organizations, for instance, emphasized the dangers of DDA integration.

*"The issue is that, if they become government bodies, they have to be government voices as well and lose their independence. They should act as a check on behalf of the people. Not as a government voice because they need the government to keep paying their salaries"*

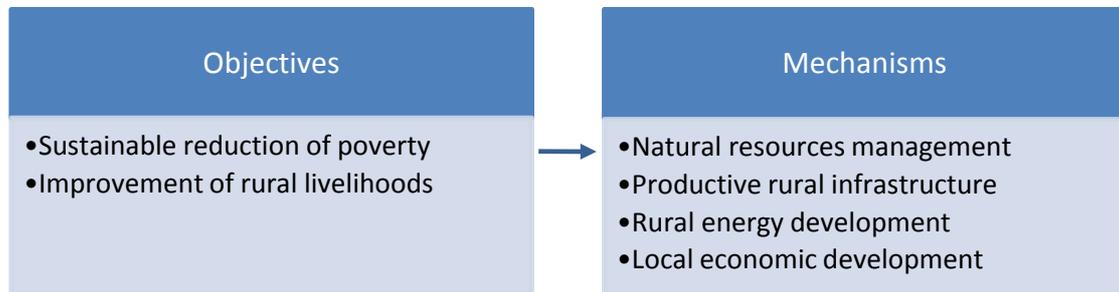
**– Civil Society Actor in Kabul**

One stakeholder working directly with DDAs on capacity building issues explained that government incorporation would overly politicize the DDAs and decrease their effectiveness, that *"DDAs will start working from themselves instead of for their communities."* When confronted with the criticism of the MRRD's push for formalization, one NABDP staff member explained that, if the DDAs are not given salaries, they will simply embezzle project funds, using *"their lack of support for their own expenses as their excuse and then just steal more."* Beneficiary accusations of embezzlement were high, with male and female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries often claiming that DDA members were using project funds often for their own purposes. One group of female beneficiaries in Herat Province did not believe that the DDA embezzled funds for themselves, but noted that the DDA had used excess funds to pay for the construction of a wedding hall with the NABDP's awareness.

Whether or not DDAs are formally integrated into the government, they represent government structures. (Notably, the MRRD has begun issuing ID cards with MRRD emblems to DDA members. ID cards include a DDA member's name, picture, term of service, and representing district.) The DDAs' roles and responsibilities stand at a crossroads with several stakeholders strongly advocating for one direction as a CSO focused on development and others who view the DDAs as potentially broader and formal government agencies.

## Broadening the DDA's Role and Responsibilities

The DDA's role as of now is limited to specific development activities believed to address a set of two primary objectives (See Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Objectives and Mechanisms of the DDA**

The NABDP provides extensive support (in the form of funding, technical expertise, and monitoring) to DDAs to implement projects that qualify under the four set mechanisms and work towards meeting the NABDP's objectives. Admittedly, the NABDP provincial staff in Herat noted that both DDAs and their own employees occasionally struggle to place a community's needs within the four categories. The Community Mobilizer noted that communities often want to implement projects that benefit the community but are *not* sanctioned as accepted mechanisms. Non-standard proposals are not encouraged, because the NABDP must develop the technical expertise to help communities design and construct the projects. DDA members in Karrukh District noted a desire to implement non-standard projects that were discouraged by the NABDP staff. On the other hand, staff members expressed a willingness to support DDA members implement non-standard projects that meet the NABDP's objectives though they noted that such projects require more time and support than typical, indicating a disconnect of perceptions between the DDA and the NABDP provincial and central offices.

DDA members advocated for broader NABDP project types, requesting more flexibility in the project selection process.

*"We would like to have the opportunity to do things for our communities that do not require building something or providing a course for women. We want the chance to help improve the teachers in the schools and to help fund bright, young people's higher education. We do not have this capacity now, and we do not get this type of help and this type of funding from the NABDP, but we think it would be very good if we did. Otherwise, we have to look for other organizations from which we can get funding for these types of activities."*

**– DDA member in Khanabad District in Kunduz Province**

NABDP staff across the board responded positively to this request, explaining that, with time, the DDA's role and projects could expand further. The central NABDP office, along with the two regional heads, noted that the NABDP's capacity for development is high. The current head of the NABDP highlighted the NABDP's past development as a key indicator of its future potential to take on broader responsibilities.

*“The role of DDAs changed over time...It was completely unintentional. There was a lack of local governance and this development group became the local governance group and that’s the new course it is taking as it is broader and thus encompasses development projects.”*

**– Key informant interview with NABDP staff in Kabul Province**

The DDAs themselves often wanted to take on a broader role, but only within the context of government incorporation. They noted that they wanted to act as the government representative at the district-level. While the government already has district governors, neither the DDA nor the NABDP staff understood district governor’s roles, often believing their roles to overlap with the local DDAs’ roles. In Paktia, the DDA explained that, since their establishment, community members approached DDA members instead of the district governor for issues, such as conflict resolution, normally under the jurisdiction of the district governor. In Karrukh District in Herat, the district governor explained that he felt he acted as a supervisor to the DDAs; if the DDA was unable to resolve an issue, then he believed the people would approach him before going to provincial-level authorities.

Regardless of whether the DDA’s role is broadened and brought under the umbrella of the formal government system, the relationship of DDAs with district governors is an issue thus far unaddressed. The potential overlap between the DDA and other bodies, such as the development-based CDC or the governance-based district governor, remains high and invites room for ineffective and duplicated structures. Prior to taking forward the potential formalization of the DDA, the NABDP should consult relevant stakeholders and the governance landscape to produce a more sustainable structure as well address several key issues already existing in the DDA’s structure, particularly its lack of active female involvement.

### **Women’s Role in the DDA**

The GIRoA constitution does not specify the structure and composition of District Councils, which allowed the NABDP the full freedom to establish its own structure. DDAs consist of 18 men and 12 women, a change from the original requirement of 15 men and 15 women (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4. DDA Composition**

Notably, the NABDP reduced the number of females required in a DDA in response to difficulties meeting the 50 percent requirement. While the central and provincial DDA offices contend that a minimum of 12 women are required in a DDA, all DDAs interviewed believed that a maximum of 12 women were allowed on the DDA. DDA members were unaware of why the number was reduced, particularly in Herat and Balkh where females participate in politics at a high rate comparative to the rest of the country. DDA members in these provinces lamented the perceived “maximum” female requirement, noting that there were several more qualified women unable to participate on the DDA. The opposite was true in eastern and southern provinces, including Kabul Province, where the NABDP struggled to reach out to potential female DDA members due to cultural restrictions preventing strong female participation in the public sphere.

After the DDA is elected by CCDCs, the DDA elects four official representatives: President, Deputy President, Treasurer and Secretary. One of these officials must be women, ensuring a gender balance both within the general DDA membership and its leadership.

Regardless of the numerical gender balance, the NABDP faces challenges encouraging equal participation between men and women on DDAs. Female DDA members reported mixed results. Some believed that female DDA members were active and vocal participants in the DDA whereas others felt like they were placeholders without voices to meet the NABDP's requirements.

*“He just writes the proposals and chooses the projects by himself or with other men – I do not know – and they ask our opinion on it but that’s it. It does not help very much because we only hear about it when it is over and just say yes to it.”*

– Female DDA member

Female DDA members often contended that, though they were grateful to have the opportunity to be on a DDA given that *shuras* are traditionally only male, they did not feel like they had the opportunity to be active participants in the DDA. Field teams observed several key challenges facing female participation in DDAs:

1. *Lower capacity among female members* – Females in Afghanistan, generally suffering from less access to educational opportunities, demonstrate lower understanding about administration, finances, project management, and development. The NABDP's trainings are uniformly provided to all male and female members, despite male members' generally higher capacity than female members. Female DDA members in Paktia recommended, for instance, providing additional, separate trainings to female DDA members.
2. *Challenges to Access* – Female DDA members typically maintain their employment and family obligations, and have little petty cash. Whether or not a woman is employed, her husband or male relative typically handles her finances. As such, female DDA members who need taxi fare to go to a meeting are often unable to afford travel. Four DDA members interviewed in Argo District in Badakhshan Province walked a total of two hours to reach the DDA building from their home villages in order to speak with field teams, noting that they typically miss DDA meetings because they could not afford taxi fare. Female DDA members sometimes face further limitations participating in meetings with unrelated male members.

*“In most districts, many husbands still don’t allow women to go to the district centers. As the decisions are made in the centers by the DDA members who can sit in a tent, store, governor’s house, etc., they can make decisions. But the women can’t. The female DDA members don’t have the freedom do that. If they are coming from a village 5 hours walking, she can’t come and go for the night. She needs a space. She needs a shelter for the night. So, for now, she can only put a stamp on men’s decision.”*

– Badakhshan Development Forum

3. *Lack of Equality* – Some female DDA members, particularly in Jalalabad, Kabul, Herat and Kunduz, believed that male DDA members did not treat them equally, explaining that women did not have the opportunity to participate in project

selection. Female DDA members did not feel comfortable expressing their opinions, and often felt that projects were selected and implemented without their required input.

Women further often differentiated between “women’s projects” and “men’s projects,” believing that infrastructure projects – such as bridge construction, road graveling and canal cleaning – only benefited men. Due to women’s generally limited access to areas outside of their homes, female DDA members felt that such projects (which are meant to be community-wide) did not benefit them. They preferred projects that directly targeted women in their homes, such as vocational training in bee keeping or sewing.

Female DDA members thus often lacked more than a seat on the DDA, representing required involvement without actual voice. They felt like marginalized placeholders though many also believed that their elected involvement – even if part of a quota – represented positive sign of women’s involvement both in the greater governance structure as well as in their individual communities.

### Reaching Rural Communities

In addition to reaching female population, what remains as an additional obstacle for the NABDP is the enormously uneven capacity and interest of DDAs. While a primary aim of the NABDP is to reach extremely rural areas that may lack exposure to provincial-level governance, the capacity and development of DDAs remains much higher in urban and semi-rural areas. The DDAs with the highest capacities in Herat, for instance, were reportedly located in Enjil and Karrukh District, both located on main roads from Herat City and notably close to the city. The districts, while generally rural, contained large bazaar areas. While capacity is unsurprisingly high closer to provincial capacities, the issue appears when considered in conjunction with the dispersment of NABDP projects. More projects were implemented in Karrukh and Enjil districts than anywhere else in Herat, Similarly, of the over one thousand projects implemented thus far in Badakhshan Province, three DDAs – in the districts Argo, Faizabad (containing the capital city), and Yaftal-e-Sufla – have implemented over 30 percent of NABDP projects. Projects are concentrated close to provincial capitals in districts that are less rural relative to the rest of the province.

The NABPP, in line with its mission, aims to reach the most rural areas of Afghanistan, laying an emphasis on districts further from provincial capitals. The actual division of NABDP projects reveals that there is a *de facto* emphasis on districts closer to provincial capitals. Apart from DDA’s general higher capacity close to provincial capitals, there are two primary reasons for this trend: (1) instance of elite capture, which will be discussed in-depth later and (2) easier NABDP staff access close to provincial capitals. NABDP provincial offices, based in the capitals, inevitably access closer districts with less difficulty than districts from their offices. Projects implemented closer to the NABDP office allow for more frequent monitoring and more technical assistance from NABDP.

While NABDP provincial offices attempt to expand their reach and emphasize rural programming, they have not been able to fully overcome the obstacles of extremely rural programming.

# District Development Plans

## Framework for Development

After the NABDP has facilitated the creation of a DDA, community mobilizers help DDA members prioritize development projects in their District Development Plan (DDP), which outlines the projects they hope to implement in their respective district. To develop a DDP, a DDA is commissioned to first gather all CDCs' equivalent prioritization lists, the Community Development Plans within that respective district. Once all CDPs are represented and reviewed, the DDA is responsible for developing the districts' primary needs based on the collective CDPs.

This bottom-up approach is further supported by the NABDP election system. Given that most DDA members are also CDC members, the former bring their direct experience selecting and prioritizing an area's needs to the DDA. The retention of experience becomes particularly useful when considered alongside DDA members generally low capacity.

## Bottom-Up Approach

Building on its prioritization of the Millennium Development Goals and Afghanistan Compact, the GfR developed and adopted the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) as the country's guiding development strategy from 2008 to 2013.<sup>13</sup> The development was supposed to represent "[a] comprehensive 'bottom-up' approach" built from 18,500 Community Development Plans (CDPs), 345 District Development Plans (DDPs) and 34 Provincial Development Plans. The process was designed to be truly representative, attempting to incorporate the priority needs of every Afghan village through the NSP and every district through the NABDP (see Figure 5).

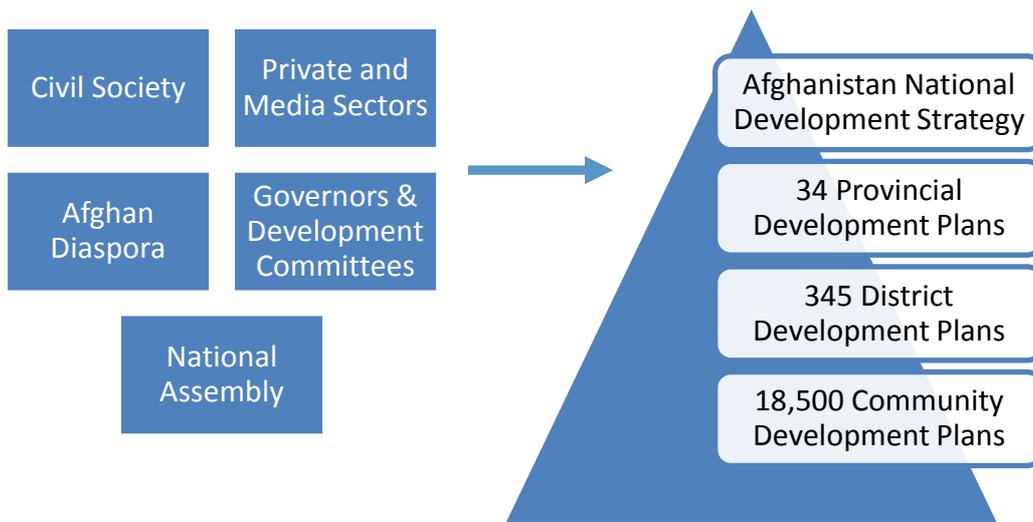


Figure 5. ANDS Consultation Process

<sup>13</sup> Afghanistan National Development Strategy (2008-2013): A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction.

During the consultation process for the ANDS, the PDPs were supposed to consult relevant line ministries and plans as well as DDPs. Though the NABDP program required the DDPs to be developed from the CDPs, the PDP development committees were nonetheless sanctioned to consider both the CDPs and DDPs in their provinces separately. This, however, was often not the case. The bottom-up links were inconsistent and often non-existent.

DDA and Provincial Council members who were interviewed reported having used the lower-level plans - the CDPs and DDPs, respectively – but conceded that they had not only neglected to consult other plans, but often failed to even read them. Thus, while each level developed a plan for their constituencies, they failed to link plans to one another. The DDAs interviewed, most significantly, openly acknowledged never consulting CDP's plans, occasionally demonstrating an unawareness of which villages were even represented by CDCs and which had yet to be represented.

Most members of DDAs who were interviewed explained that they did not directly consult CDPs while they were developing their DDPs. While members of the DDAs are generally also CDC members, and thus played a part in developing their village CDP, not all CDC members in a district are represented in a DDA. Those CDC members also on the DDA were only able to represent their villages' CDPs, failing to incorporate all other villages' CDPs.

#### **Interview with a Deputy Provincial Council Head**

*Interviewer: "Did you read the District Development Plans when you were developing the PDP?"*

*Deputy Provincial Council Head: "Yes, of course."*

*Interviewer: "Do you remember which ones you read or what they said?"*

*Deputy Provincial Council Head: "All of them. For every district, there is one plan made by the DDAs."*

*Interviewer: "And what did they say? Did you use them to prioritize your provinces' needs?"*

*Deputy Provincial Council Head: "Well, I don't remember. The truth is that I did not read them. I don't believe anyone read them. We developed the provincial plans by speaking to each other and others. We already understand what the issues are in the province without looking at these other plans because we are from here."*

Not only were CDPs not consulted during the DDA development process, but Provincial Council members interviewed also attested to disregarding DDPs. Provincial Council members, who were responsible for developing the PDPs that reportedly directly fed into the ANDS, had never read the DDPs at all, instead developing the PDPs from their own perception of their provinces' priority needs.

DDAs and PDPs failure to incorporate their constituency's specific plans highlights the fragmented nature of the development of the ANDS. Though believed to be the culmination of thousands of subsidiary plans, the ANDS lacked district-level input from DDA's DDPs.

#### **Quality and Capacity**

As elaborated upon in the previous chapter, field observations indicated low levels of capacity (in terms of contextual assessment, dialogue, objective decision-making, etc.) among DDA members. Regardless of their capacity, before being granted development

funds by the MRRD, all DDAs must outline three-year DDPs. Through its community mobilizers, the MRRD assists DDAs in identifying, prioritizing and ultimately selecting projects that meet the districts' most crucial needs within the NABDP project budget limit. A portion of DDAs receives further assistance from international and national organizations, including the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee and the Aga Khan Foundation. The Aga Khan Foundation, for instance, provides extensive support to DDAs in Badakhshan as they develop their DDPs, placing special attention to building a collaborative environment between DDAs and CDCs. Some DDA furthermore implement plans outside of their DDPs, most often if approached to do so by the NABDP (See Box 2).

### Box 2. Special Sites outside of DDPs: Counter Narcotics Trust Fund and Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups

In order to fulfill the ANDS' Sector 6, the MRRD implemented a Labor-based Rural Development Program funded by the CNTF with the primary aim of reducing poppy cultivation and poverty. By implementing programs that result in *"food security, irrigation water, and eradication of poppy cultivation..., the program will increase...personal income, employment and improve access to rural markets..."*<sup>14</sup> The CNTF program reported directly to the head of the NABDP<sup>15</sup>, primarily funding projects within the framework of the NABDP's Productive Rural Infrastructure and Natural Resource Management Sectors. Projects implemented are not easily distinguishable in type, often taking the form road graveling and protection wall construction, but are implemented in locations determined to be narcotics production areas. The research team was not able to find NABDP criteria for the status of a narcotics production area. CNTF projects were located in both small and distant villages in the Afghan-Tajik border region as well as provincial capitals. Notably, in Badakhshan and Kunduz, non-CNTF funders supported projects in communities producing opium. CNTF was discontinued as a funding source, with notable issues appearing in the NABDP's 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report for 2010 regarding the delayed release of CNTF funds by the Ministry of Finance.<sup>16</sup> The NABDP contended that it implemented CNTF projects through the MRRD due to existing structures and mechanisms to implement such projects: *"For us, we were already doing CNTF because, if you do a development project, you are giving people jobs and thus already combating drugs trafficking. This is CNTF. All of our programs are [countering narcotics] as a result. The only reason we implemented "CNTF" projects was because we had a district-level structure for it. There was no other reason. People [including NABDP staff members] agree that CNTF was generally a failure, that it didn't do much at all and wasn't worth its own programming."* – NABDP Staff. The field teams visited five CNTF sites in Balkh, Badakhshan, Kunduz, and Badghis where DDAs implemented road-graveling projects between 2009 and 2010. No beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries understood the special counter-narcotics nature of the project. While some DDA members could name the funder, they also lacked an understanding of project's intention. In no location was the project determined to have lessened or eliminated the production of counter-narcotics.

*"The CDCs would make their plans and implement their projects but the DDAs would have no idea what the CDCs were doing."*

– Civil Society Organization

The Aga Khan Foundation, like other actors such as the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee and Mission East, failed to formally cooperate with the NABDP. While both the Foundation and NABDP were providing capacity building trainings and attempting to develop a strong link between CDCs and DDAs, neither had shared training materials with the other. The NABDP reported never even having had approached relevant actors in an attempt to

<sup>14</sup> Project Profile 1387 – 1388, Details of Ongoing and Proposed Core Development Projects, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

<sup>15</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Project Progress Report – 2010, National Area-Based Development Programme (NABDP), 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Midterm Review of the National Area Based Development Project, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, UNDP Afghanistan, Annette Ittig, April 2008.

provide collaborative trainings. Field teams reported that there was no interest among any NABDP provincial heads and community mobilizers to provide trainings in conjunction with other actors.

The NSP's decision to use FPs to implement a number of its programs and trainings allows it to monitor and influence other actors' CDC programming. The NABDP, without both FPs and collaboration with other actors, lacks the opportunity to track the work of other actors. Actors interviewed in Herat, Kabul, Badakhshan and Kunduz noted a further disinterest in approaching the NABDP to collaborate. The mutual disinterest in other actors highlights both the lack of influence NABDP has in DDA's capacity development as well as the potential opportunity for conflicting trainings. One question thus remains: why is not the NABDP using NGOs as contractors? A convincing answer was suggested to the review team by a NABDP staff member: *"The idea is to rely exclusively on the existing resources and capacity of local communities. From local communities to local communities. In practice, however, it would probably work much better if local and international NGOs or implementing partners were involved"*.

Where other actors existed, most notably in the northern provinces, the NABDP's training often overlapped with other actors' capacity development programs. Multiple actors were providing trainings on administration, finances, DDP development and more, with non-NABDP actors often disregarding the objectives of the NABDP itself. The Aga Khan Foundation, for instance, advocates and lobbies for the full transformation of DDAs into purely civil society organizations. As the MRRD attempts to incorporate the DDAs into the government, the Foundation actively opposes this. Not only do overlapping trainings pose the risk of wasted NABDP resources, other actors' trainings can pose a threat to the NABDP's efforts and long-term vision. Without collaboration, this issue remains unaddressed.

In these regards, in a context where coordination is still a buzzword for most international organizations operating at the subnational level, the NABDP should seek actual collaboration and partnerships with other actors (INGOs, NNGOs, UN agencies, IOs, coordinating agencies, clusters, etc.) to further improve its long-term programming efforts.



*Picture 2: DDA in Herat*

## Provincial Profile: Badakhshan

**Site 1:** Graveling of Tertiary Road  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Faizabad  
**Village(s):** Parna Kham, Layaba  
**Date Visited:** August 11, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** January 5, 2009  
**End Date:** September 7, 2009  
**Budget:** 106,546 USD (across two villages)  
**Donor:** CNTF  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 12,786 (across two villages)

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

### Project Overview

The project had several structural issues due to poor graveling techniques reported by the male beneficiaries. Beneficiaries held negative views of the project's prioritization, selection process, and implementation in addition to the DDA itself, which they believed was pocketing project funds.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Neither male nor female beneficiary interviewees were included in the project prioritization and selection process. Individuals explained that they had no role in the process until the DDA traveled to their village to begin building the road. While the female beneficiaries did not express a desire to be included, male beneficiaries contended that they should have been involved in the project's prioritization and planning.

#### **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male beneficiaries were unsatisfied with the project's implementation. They emphasized that their lack of involvement in the process conditioned a poor outcome and that they should have been more involved with the project's implementation. Soon after construction began, male beneficiaries noted that they observed issues with the method used to gravel the road. They believed that the road was not graveled well, but did not know how to reach the DDA in order to report the issue. Without an understanding of what to do and with few to zero visits from the DDA or the NABDP's Chief Engineer to monitor the construction, the male beneficiaries were left with no one to turn to for assistance.

Female beneficiaries were generally unaware of the project's implementation. Some even believed that the project had not yet been fully implemented.

### **(3) Sustainability**

The road already has several areas of damage and is unlikely to be sustainable due to poor graveling. Beneficiaries concurred that the project would be easily destroyed in a large flood and was only temporarily beneficial to the community as a result of the poor quality of construction.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Male beneficiaries held negative opinions of the DDA. Many believed that the DDA “spends half of projects’ funding for themselves” and “*implements projects that are of low quality.*” Accusations of corruption within the DDA were frequent. While they were unable to name other DDA projects, they contended that the DDA’s projects were generally un-useable due to their poor quality. This perception has affected the community’s preferred sources of conflict resolution. Male beneficiaries turned to their local leaders and the CDC for assistance in conflict resolution, refusing to seek assistance from the DDA because they did not “*believe in them [the DDA].*”

All those interviewed stressed the lack of women’s involvement in the DDA. They remarked that the DDA’s female members were often no more involved than female community members, and were often unaware of the DDA’s projects.

**Site 2:** Construction of Gabion Wall  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Faizabad  
**Village(s):** Qazi Abdul Aziz  
**Date Visited:** August 8, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** June 6, 2009  
**End Date:** December 15, 2010  
**Budget:** 49,928 USD  
**Donor:** UNDP  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 5,991

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

It is important to note that the female beneficiaries were interviewed whilst a female DDA member was in the room. The field team was unable to conduct a fully private interview, which may have influenced the female beneficiaries' responses.

**Project Overview**

Respondents had little information about the project's selection and implementation. While they held positive opinions, they were unable to provide basic factual information about their statements due to a general lack of knowledge about the DDA. For instance, while male beneficiaries noted that they voted in the DDA's election, none of the respondents could remember approximately how many years ago they voted. In addition, non-beneficiaries consistently mixed up the DDA and the local CDC.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female beneficiaries were unable to explain the project selection process though they all stated that they were consulted during the process indirectly through DDA discussions with their husbands. Male beneficiaries agreed, noting that they had represented their families' opinions to the DDA when asked about the possibility of the gabion wall's construction.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male and female beneficiaries believed that the project had a positive outcome for the community by protecting several families' homes and land. Female beneficiaries explained that, since the community consisted of one tribe, the construction helped keep together families and prevent those near the river from moving away in fear of flooding. They further noted that the project had a positive impact on their livelihoods. Their economic situation improved with the construction of the gabion wall because families no longer had to pay for repairs to their homes or devise alternative methods to keep their homes safe from flooding.

### **(3) Sustainability**

While male and female beneficiaries contended that the project was not implemented well and would likely not survive more than three years, the field team observed no structural issues with the gabion wall. The field team reported that the gabion wall appeared well built and did not notice any areas of structural damage.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

All beneficiaries held positive opinions of the DDA, explaining that the DDA was representative of the entire district, from every young child to elderly woman, and worked hard to improved the community's lives. The female beneficiaries noted that they all participated in the DDA's election and had felt that it was fair and transparent. Female beneficiaries had an exceptionally positive view of the DDA and noted repeatedly that women had a strong role in the DDA and, as a result of their openness to discuss women's issues, in the community as a whole.

Non-beneficiaries were unable to provide a consistent opinion of the DDA. Most of the respondents did not understand that there was a difference between a DDA and a CDC, often using the terms interchangeably.



*Picture 3: Water pump in Helmand*

**Site 3:** Construction of Bridge  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Argo  
**Village(s):** Shatak  
**Date Visited:** August 9, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** July 14, 2009  
**End Date:** July 31, 2011  
**Budget:** 69,955 USD  
**Donor:** DIAG  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 8,395

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

Due to the bridge's wide outreach, the field team was unable to locate non-beneficiaries despite visiting several villages. Beneficiaries held positive opinions of the DDA and, while they did not believe the bridge was sustainable, they contended that it had already brought positive changes to their lives and the lives of villages even further from the district center.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male beneficiaries were relatively knowledgeable about the NABDP and the project prioritization and selection process. They mentioned that, while they were not directly involved in the process, they felt included because the NABDP consulted their village representative.

*"When we select our village representative, we say that all of their opinions will be acceptable to us. Our village representative was consulted in the project selection process but I haven't [been consulted directly]."*

– Male beneficiary

Female beneficiaries interviewed were not consulted during the project prioritization and selection process. They, however, similarly noted that they felt the project was properly prioritized and addressed several of the village's needs. They further expressed no desire to take part in the process, noting that they were satisfied with the consultation

process as it stood without their direct input.

Male beneficiaries also stated that their village representative acted not only in the interest of their village, but also nearby villages that use the bridge. One beneficiary exclaimed that over 50 villages were benefiting from the project, traveling through the village to the district center via the newly constructed bridge.

## **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Female beneficiaries felt that the bridge acted as a way for the local community to connect their district to the provincial government in Faizabad both by (1) building relationships between districts and their provincial governments and (2) making transportation to and from the village to the provincial capital easier. Male beneficiaries agreed, emphasizing the bridge's assistance to the village but also mentioning that there were delays in the project's implementation before and during construction.

## **(3) Sustainability**

Female beneficiaries did not have an opinion about the sustainability of the bridge, referring our field teams instead to the men in the village who they held to be more aware of the bridge's construction and structural integrity.

While most male beneficiaries felt positive about the bridge's sustainability, two male counterparts predicted grim prospects for the bridge's sustainability. They explained that not only did they think the bridge would not function well for more than a few more years, but also that the community was unable to maintain or repair it.

## **Impressions of the DDA**

Male beneficiaries in this village notably understood the cluster-based DDA election system. They explained that their CDC village representatives voted for the DDA on behalf of their community, an action they felt was both fair and transparent. They were aware of the requirement to have female members and further gave specific examples of the youth's involvement in the DDA.

Female beneficiaries explained that, though the DDA is a potential source of conflict resolution in the village, the community has never encountered a problem that it was unable to resolve at the CDC-level. They noted that they still preferred informal justice institutions like their families and village elders to semi-formal and formal institutions like the CDC and DDA. Male beneficiaries reiterated this opinion.

**Site 4:** Cleaning of Canal  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Argo  
**Village(s):** Chatraq, Naw Abad Shahmiri  
**Date Visited:** August 10, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** July 16, 2011  
**End Date:** December 10, 2011  
**Budget:** 15,380 USD (across two villages)  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 1,846 (across two villages)

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Impressions of the DDA and general understanding of the project were mixed, with some beneficiaries holding positive views of both the project and DDA and others heavily criticizing the project's lack of sustainability and the DDA's perceived disregard for women's needs in the community. The project, which was not funded by the CNTF, was being used for opium production by local villages.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

While some female beneficiaries were unaware of the project prioritization and selection process, others were fairly knowledgeable. Similarly, the DDA consulted some of the male beneficiary interviewees before the project's selection. Nonetheless, all of the beneficiaries – male and female - believed that the project was the most important project that could have been implemented for the community within the NABDP-allocated budget.

***“The project was very relevant to us...There was a project more important than this project, but that project was not implemented because there was not enough funding for it.”***  
**– Male beneficiary**

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male beneficiaries explained that the project was well implemented and provided employment for men both in the village and neighboring villages, including villages that did not benefit directly from the canal's cleaning. The beneficiaries – some of whom worked as laborers on the project's construction – were satisfied with the project's implementation, which they said finished ahead of schedule because of the community's support for the project. Male beneficiaries reported that some laborers worked overtime without extra pay to finish the canal's cleaning before the winter so that the community would sooner benefit from the project's completion.

Beneficiaries noted alternative uses for the project, including the washing of clothes and bathing. They also use the canal as a source of drinking and cooking water. Notably, while the project was not funded by the CNTF, the field team observed several female and male villages involved in opium production using the canal's water.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike felt that the project was sustainable, noting that the canal was still flowing without obstruction after nearly six months since the canal's initial cleaning. The beneficiaries' only concern was the possibility of a flood increasing the waste found in the canal. The field team, however, reported that the project required regular maintenance that the community was not only unable to provide, but also felt was unnecessary.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Female beneficiaries expressed different levels of understanding of the NABDP. One beneficiary voted in both DDA elections and was fairly knowledgeable about the DDA, which she regarded as a positive local governance actor in the district. Most other beneficiaries demonstrated very limited to no knowledge of the DDA, sometimes repeating what other female beneficiaries said verbatim. Female beneficiaries generally held a positive view of the DDA. One female beneficiary, who had little knowledge of the DDA, criticized the DDA for failing to reach out to women in the communities. She explained that she had strong governmental contacts through her family and felt that she could help the DDA win and implement projects, bringing substantial change to the community members' livelihoods. Female beneficiaries were also critical of the DDA's perceived refusal to implement projects designed specifically to benefit women.

***"The DDA hasn't implemented and prioritized projects for women because men have the stronger roles in the DDA and men don't allow female DDA members to implement projects for women." – Female beneficiary***

Male beneficiaries disagreed, stating that women were fairly represented on the DDA and in the project selection process. They contended that the canal, for instance,

benefited both men and women and that the DDA should never implement projects that only benefit one gender.

Male beneficiaries further criticized the DDA for perceived corruption, saying that the DDA spends "20 percent of project's budgets on project implementation and 80 percent for themselves." Not all male beneficiaries agreed, some noting that the DDA was a fair and honest representative of the district's people and disregarding the accusations of corruption.

## Provincial Profile: Badghis

Female interviewers were unable to travel to Badghis due to high security risks, thereby precluding focus groups with female beneficiaries. The field team sent to Badghis, consisting of two highly experienced national interviewers, faced significant security issues on the way to and from Qala-e-Nau as well as in the province. On the way to Badghis, the field team was traveling in proximity to oil tankers, a common target for insurgents. In order to ensure their security on the way back to Herat from Badghis, the team turned to the RRD for logistical advice. The NABDP staff in Qala-e-Nau put the field team in touch with three local village elders. The field team hired the local elders, who were armed, to accompany their taxi across their villages in order to guarantee their safety. Similar issues existed in Kandahar and Helmand, reducing the field teams' access.

**Site 1:** Construction of Micro-Hydro Power Plants

**Sector:** Rural Energy Development

**Location:** Qala-e-Nau

**Village(s):** Charbagh 1 and 2

**Date Visited:** September 6, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** May 10, 2011

**End Date:** January 1, 2012

**Budget:** 99,215 USD (for two plants)

**Donor:** Spanish

**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 840

Overall Site Indicators			
Community Involvement and Awareness	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> UNKNOWN</td> <td> HIGH</td> </tr> </table>	 UNKNOWN	 HIGH
 UNKNOWN	 HIGH		
Observation of Project's Structure	Leakages observed		
Impression of the DDA	Varied		

### Project Overview

The project was highly commended by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike, though the latter group explained that, because their village is not represented in the DDA, they have not been able to benefit from the project. Field teams observed that, due to the unidentified material used to construct the project, the plant was not able to function at full capacity, leaking water in several areas.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male beneficiaries noted that local village populations, their CDCs, and the DDA were involved in the project prioritization and selection process. Though the MRRD oversaw the process, the MRRD was not involved in the actual project prioritization process, an important distinction emphasized by male beneficiaries.

The project required that several homes donate their land and approve the removal of trees

thereon. The DDA attained full spoken consent from all families before proceeding; families, optimistic about the opportunity of having consistent access to sustainable electricity were reportedly willing to donate their land in favor of the project's selection.

## (2) Project Implementation and Outcomes

*"Before the project's implementation, people used candles and different lamps for lighting. Now, all of the people [in this area] use electricity to light their homes...they don't need to buy combustible material."*

– Male beneficiary

The project reportedly had a large impact on people's lives, providing a sustainable mechanism to access electricity.

The respondents claimed that the project's success lied in its sustainability and far-reaching results. Families spent less money on energy by relying on the micro-hydro plant

instead of combustible materials, thereby improving their economic situation. Women were able to use the electricity to promote their tailoring businesses. Youth were able to use the project to charge their mobile phones and operate their televisions. Those who participated in the construction of the project earned additional income for their labor. They furthermore noted that the plant's electrical production was safer than combustible alternatives.

## (3) Sustainability

Beneficiaries contended the project was highly sustainable. The communities' payment for electricity went directly to (1) a live-in trained community member who maintains and repairs the plant as necessary and (2) a fund for future maintenance. The community felt that there were no issues with corruption or overuse by some families and that the money went directly to the technician or the fund, leading to a sustainable system without a basis for conflict.

Beneficiaries highlighted the fund set up for future maintenance. Though no beneficiary could state the current amount in the fund or where the fund's assets were kept, they believed that it would be accessible and necessary for future maintenance. As a water-based system constructed partially with iron, the respondents said that the project would naturally wear down over the course of several years due to rust. The community felt that the project, thus, required external support. Field teams observed that few villagers had knowledge about the fund kept for the plant's future maintenance.

Field teams further noted that the plant, which was constructed from several different materials, including concrete and iron, had several portions made from a mixture of different unidentifiable materials. These sections appeared to waste water, thereby producing less electricity than the plant was capable of producing.

## Impressions of the DDA

Respondents held positive views of the DDA, believing it to be a non-corrupt entity working towards solving the needs of the people and villages in their area. Beneficiaries highlighted several projects – graveling of roads, construction of small bridges, and more – that occurred throughout the district, contending that the DDA treated all villages in the district equally and looked for where help was most needed. While the DDA was not a source of conflict resolution for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, neither group believed that the possibility was out of the question. Non-beneficiaries

*"Women are adequately represented in the DDA and they participate in the implementation of tailoring and literacy projects. The representatives are from the different ethnicities and they represented their own ethnicity."*

– Male beneficiary

contended that the DDA would be able to help communities resolve their conflicts as well based on its assistance to the larger community through infrastructure projects. All respondents nonetheless maintained that they preferred to resolve conflicts at the village level.

Interestingly, while the respondents all noted that the DDA was representative of its district, they mentioned that individual DDA members only represented their specific gender and/or ethnicity. The diversity of the DDA itself, then, was the cause of the overall DDA's representativeness. For instance, one non-beneficiary stated that he was never consulted on the project selection prioritization because the DDA lacked a representative from his village.

**Site 2:** Gravelling of Tertiary Road  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Qala-e-Nau  
**Village(s):** Houzi Khodai and Kalan  
**Date Visited:** September 5, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** March 12, 2009  
**End Date:** May 1, 2010  
**Budget:** 63,577 (for both road projects through two villages)  
**Donor:** CNTF  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 7,630

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

The project reached several villages, providing an easier way of transporting goods from one location to another. While the project was funded by the CNTF, there was no evidence that the project reduced poppy cultivation in the area. Field teams observed that the gravelling of the road, in reality, likely made it easier to transport and sell the village's product to other communities. The beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were generally completely unaware of the NABDP program, unable to state basic facts regarding their local DDA.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

All male beneficiaries interviewed reported being consulted by the DDA about the project's selection, asserting that the process was transparent. Respondents said that the DDA chose to construct the road as opposed to pursuing other projects because multiple villages could benefit from the road, giving it the largest potential impact in the district.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Field teams observed that the project was 15 centimeters thick and five kilometers long. Over the course of its length, five small bridges were built to help ease traffic. Beneficiaries noted that the project significantly reduced their travel time and related difficulties.

*"In the past, we didn't have a road and we had to travel by foot for one or two hours. Now, we come and go by car and motorcycle in 30 minutes."*

– Village malek

The village malek further stated the project indirectly affected the community's economic situation (by providing an easier way for residents to take their products to the local market) and health access (by making hospitals easier to reach). The malek explained that the project not only benefited his village, but also villages further from the capital city, which he says use the constructed road to travel from their villages to the capital.

### (3) Sustainability

While beneficiaries and the field team did not observe any structural issues with the road itself, the beneficiaries emphasized that, due to the large amount of traffic going to and from the village as a result of the road, they felt that the road would require regular maintenance. The beneficiaries stated that they were unable to raise the funds for maintenance, raising fears of the project's sustainability.

#### Impressions of the DDA

The village malek, a CDC and DDA member, held a very positive view about the joint MRRD-UNDP venture to establish the NABDP program, explaining that, without the UNDP's technical and financial support, the *"projects aren't implemented."* Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were equally impressed by the DDA and its supporting organizations, but many expressed the fear that the DDA would not be a sustainable entity.

No one appeared to have an understanding of basic facts about the DDA or NABDP apart from the village malek. One male beneficiary, for instance, believed that the DDA consisted of nine men and nine women. Though beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries understood that the

*"The main issue is that they [the DDA members] don't receive a payment. They have to work to earn food for their family [in addition to their work with the DDA]. They can't improve their work [with the DDA] but, if they are paid, then they will be able to work better."*

– DDA member

DDA was a district-level authority that implemented infrastructure projects, they were unaware of who was on the DDA, what projects they implemented outside of their own immediate area, and so on. Though they had little awareness of the DDA system, they maintained that they all participated in the DDA's election.



*Picture 4: Sustainment wall in Paktia*

**Site 3:** Construction of Canal  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Ab Kamari  
**Village(s):** Qaltak  
**Date Visited:** September 4, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** November 22, 2010  
**End Date:** November 10, 2011  
**Budget:** 59,989 USD  
**Donor:** Spanish  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 6,479

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

The project was well received by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, appreciating the project's outcome for the security of agricultural lands and homes. Nonetheless, beneficiaries had little knowledge about DDAs and the project itself.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male beneficiaries stated that the project had been created for their benefit and with the assistance of extensive consultations. There was a lot of confusion between the DDA and CDC, with many members believing that the CDC implemented the project but describing the local CDC as having a DDA structure with thirty members. Nonetheless, beneficiaries were satisfied with the canal, believing it to have substantially assisted their community by preventing floods from spilling over onto their agricultural land and damaging their homes.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Field teams observed that the canal was approximately 140 meters long and two meters wide. They did not observe any technical issues with the canal. Respondents further indicated that the canal had significantly improved their livelihoods, protecting them from frequent floods.

*"Before the construction of the canal, all the people in this area were in dangers. There was a flood every year and we couldn't sleep during the night. If the canal wasn't constructed, I think all of the local people would have moved from this area. After the construction of the canal, all of the people can now live safely."*

– Male beneficiarv

The beneficiaries further noted they appreciated the temporary employment the canal's construction brought to their village, which they contend has a high unemployment rate.

### **(3) Sustainability**

The beneficiaries were positive about the canal's sustainability, noting that it could handle current and past levels of flooding. Should the project require repairs for any reason, however, beneficiaries stated that they would be unable to maintain the canal.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

As noted, the beneficiaries had little to no understanding of the NABDP, including the DDA, NABDP and MRRD. One beneficiary believed that the DDA was a national-level council. Another believed that the DDA's election process allowed each individual community member to place a vote for a candidate in a traditional democratic system. Yet another believed that the CDCs were subsidiaries of the DDA, which they thought to be a formal government council. Regardless of their limited awareness, they nonetheless had positive impressions of the DDA, believing that it acted as a bridge between local communities and the government.

**Site 4:** Gravelling of a Tertiary Road  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Ab Kamari  
**Village(s):** Laghari, Aghak, Chashma Ghaibee, Dahanzaw  
**Date Visited:** September 3, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** March 12, 2009  
**End Date:** May 1, 2010  
**Budget:** 178,272 USD (across four projects)  
**Donor:** CNTF  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 21, 393 (across four villages)

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	Rain damage	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Respondents were pessimistic about the DDA's sustainability, but felt that the project implemented was highly sustainable. The field team observed several areas of rain damage to the road, and explained that the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries had little information about the road's construction, selection, or its current state.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

The respondents all explained that they were directly involved in the project's selection process. Furthermore, while none were CDC members, all stated that they directly took part in the DDA's elections, bringing to question the beneficiaries' actual involvement in both processes. The beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries nonetheless noted that the project was fairly implemented across several villages that lacked a paved road. While other communities also required paved roads, the beneficiaries were unable to explain why their village was chosen to benefit from the project.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

The road is nine kilometers long, three meters wide and 15 centimeters thick in the village of Laghari. In other villages visited, the road's length varied from two kilometers to six kilometers. The road, constructed across four different villages, increased the communities' ability to access the district center. Respondents explained to field teams that, prior to the road's construction, people traveled with great difficulty either on foot or on a donkey. With the road's construction, villagers' conception of "localized" broadened, allowing them to access markets and hospitals that otherwise were outside of their proximity. Male beneficiaries noted that women in the community were now able to travel to nearby villages with greater frequency, coming and going as they wished since travel time decreased. This claim remains unconfirmed because the field team's male interviewers were unable to interview any female beneficiaries. Field teams noted few to no women on the road.

### **(3) Sustainability**

While the local population felt that the project was sustainable, the field teams observed rain damage along several-meter long segments of the road. The beneficiaries refuted that there were any issues with the project but. If issues arose, however, the community would be unable to address them without external assistance.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Local respondents, including the villa4ge malek, were very skeptical about the future of the DDA and other governance programs. The malek, who is on the local CDC, noted that funding has decreased for CDC and DDA project, leaving them incapable of implementing sufficient projects to be respected in their communities. Because funding has decreased, the malek believed that the DDAs would soon be “destroyed.”

Interestingly, while the project was CNTF-funded, there were no indications of narcotics production or use in the area and, when asked, community members claimed the villages benefiting from the road had never cultivated poppy.



*Picture 5: Tertiary road in Paktia*

# Provincial Profile: Balkh

**Site 1:** Construction of a Water Supply Network  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Mazar-e-Sharif  
**Village(s):** District Center  
**Date Visited:** August 2, 2012

**Project Overview**  
**Start Date:** December 22, 2009  
**End Date:** October 11, 2010  
**Budget:** 216,234 USD  
**Donor:** CRDA-Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 25,948

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Not Applicable	

## Project Overview

The project, implemented via joint partnership between the DDA and an MRRD-selected contractor, was received positively by the community. That said, some beneficiaries expressed a desire for the project to not only supply water, but also to clean the water. While MRRD documentation indicates that the DDA selected the project, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries asserted that their district did not have a DDA, rendering the responsible party for the project unclear to field teams.

### (1) Project Prioritization and Selection

All beneficiaries interviewed noted an appreciation for the MRRD's efforts to involve the local community in the project prioritization and selection process, explaining that the MRRD's decision to select the project was a direct result of community consultation.

### (2) Project Implementation and Outcomes

*"Yes, the project has been very useful to us because in the past it was too hard to live here without [adequate] drinking water. But after implementation of the project, we have a comfortable life here."*  
 – Male beneficiary

Male and female beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the project. The former noted that, prior to the project's implementation, families were obliged to purchase drinking water from the local market. Households were able to save funds as a result of the project, which reduced their need for purchased water. While one male beneficiary criticized the water's quality, most beneficiaries remained appreciative of the NABDP's initiative.

Male beneficiaries also explained the benefits the water supply network had on their agricultural lands. The increased level of water available to the community and the ease of use allowed farmers to irrigate their land and gardens with ease.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries all believed the project was sustainable, contending that there was no reason why the project would need repair or maintenance. They stated that the project was well-built and would benefit the community for years to come.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries explained that there was no DDA in Balkh District, and that they thereby did not have any impressions of the DDA. They further noted a desire for a DDA in their district, explaining that some of the large-scale projects implemented by their local CDCs and PRRD should be implemented by a DDA. In reality, however, there is a DDA in Balkh district but its existence, action and objectives have remained largely unknown among local communities.

The non-beneficiaries appeared to be very disappointed with the development work in their village and stated that the current project have primarily benefited the business and private companies rather than the local communities. They also argued that the MRRD should pay more attention to their needs in the future as well as having more supervision on the work done by the CDC.

**Site 2:** Construction of MRRD Building  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Mazar-e-Sharif  
**Village(s):** District center  
**Date Visited:** August 5, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** May 20, 2003  
**End Date:** September 21, 2004  
**Budget:** 32,227 USD  
**Donor:** CIDA-General  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,867

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Not Applicable	

The Balkh field team visited a productive rural infrastructure project implemented by the NABDP for its own programming. The NABDP's growing staff required a larger office space outside of the main MRRD building, resulting in the construction of a MRRD building for the NABDP. The team visited similar sites in Herat and Helmand.

The implementation of this project requires special discussion about its relevance to the goals of the NABDP. As a government entity, the NABDP is commissioned to reach extremely rural populations in order to improve their livelihoods. Construct a building for its own use – though improving the provincial teams ability to fulfill its responsibilities – does not directly impact rural populations. The construction of provincial NABDP buildings, while sometimes necessary, should thus not be considered part of the NABDP's programming and successful completed projects. Internal capacity building and infrastructure development should remain separate from the MRRD's actual programming.

Regardless of this, beneficiaries (MRRD employees) reported high satisfaction with the construction of the building, noting that it was well built and sufficiently large for the provincial team. Due to the unique nature of this NABDP project, there were no non-beneficiaries interviewed.

**Site 3:** Gravelling of a Tertiary Road  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Balkh District  
**Village(s):** Alquchi  
**Date Visited:** August 4, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** September 7, 2009  
**End Date:** June 30, 2012  
**Budget:** 29,130 USD  
**Donor:** CNTF  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,496

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	Several issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries expressed in the focus groups that the road was selected and implemented by a foreign organization. Respondents were critical of the road and asserted that it was poorly constructed due to corruption and a lack of community involvement. Community members held positive views about the DDA, but remained unaware of their involvement with the road's gravelling.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Both male and female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were unaware of the project prioritization and selection process. Male beneficiaries believed the road was graveled by a foreign organization, and female beneficiaries admitted to being unable to name the responsible group.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

All respondents were highly dissatisfied with the road's gravelling. The field team observed that the road is too narrow to allow for two cars to drive comfortable next to one another or to pass another on the road, an issue male beneficiaries noted slowed down traffic immensely. Male beneficiaries joked that they often preferred to drive on the side of the road because driving on the paved road took too long.

Male beneficiaries nonetheless noted that the road's construction has decreased the dust in the area. This, however, was not worth the dangers inherent in driving on a narrow road. Female beneficiaries held no opinion of the road's outcome, explaining that they hardly left their homes to drive on the road and were thus unable to provide their opinions.

**(3) Sustainability**

Male beneficiaries contended that material used to construct the road was poor quality and would last no more than five years. They further noted that the community lacked the

resources and skills to maintain and/or repair the road in the future. Beneficiaries felt dependent on outside aid that they contended they were unable to afford.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Despite their unfamiliarity with the DDA, male beneficiaries strongly asserted that those involved in the project's implementation must have been corrupt. Because they were unaware of who "those involved" were, however, the male beneficiaries differentiated between the DDA and "those involved" in the project's implementation. Beneficiaries – male and female alike – held positive views of the DDA but negative views of the implementer of the project, unaware that the DDA itself had implemented the project.

*"The DDA in our area is very effective. They can do their work well, easily and without any obstacles. When they receive budget to do projects, they do their work honestly and they are trustworthy. But the other associations and organizations are not trustworthy like the DDA, they [the private companies and other organizations] steal the money that belong to projects."*

– Male Beneficiary

Beneficiaries all noted that, if the project's selection and implementation were more transparent processes, then the road would have invariably been constructed in a manner that better benefited the community. As it stood, respondents told field teams that the road was more of a hindrance than productive rural infrastructure.

*"The road should be broader and standard [sized] but they made the road very narrow. They were not honest about the expenditures; they put the money in their own pockets. Two vehicles can't cross easily on this road and accidents happen every day [as a result]. They steal the money which belongs to the people."*

– Male beneficiary

**Site 4:** Construction of a School Building  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Balkh District  
**Village(s):** District Center  
**Date Visited:** August 3, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** December 22, 2009  
**End Date:** October 11, 2010  
**Budget:** 247,045 USD  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 29,645

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Unclear	

**Project Overview**

The school building was generally well received and beneficiaries believed that it was a useful addition to the community's educational facilities. The school building served almost the entirety of the district, leading to no non-beneficiaries concentrated in a specific area. Notably, some female beneficiaries believed that the project only benefited women and that the local governance institutions disregarded women in the community. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries further expressed confusion about the project's implementer, believing it to be the government but unable to specify further. Contrary to the NABDP's statements, the community members believed that there was no DDA functioning in their district – which corroborates the impression that most communities do not know the local DDA, as its actions and achievements have *“exclusively focused on a few communities, where they spent all the money they had”* (Focus Group Participant in Balkh, January 2013).

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries indicated that they were not involved during the project prioritization and selection process. While one male beneficiary reportedly attended the inauguration of the school, he noted that the *“only person who has information is the community leader.”*

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Prior to the project's implementation, teachers were forced to hold year-round classes in tents and in the hot sun, creating a difficult learning environment in the country's hot northern regions. Male beneficiaries claimed that the entirety of Balkh district was benefiting from the school's construction. The field team traveled to other villages within the district and, in each location, found students who attended the school, revealing the lack of non-beneficiaries. Given the district's relatively small size, the school's widespread service delivery is not unusual. One male beneficiary noted that the school attracted about one thousand students prior to the building's construction but, after the completion of the project, enrollment had increased substantially.

*“The people are very happy with the government’s actions because the government solved their problems and helped them.” – Female beneficiary*

One female beneficiary indicated the project successfully improved the community’s view of the government, with the former expressing gratefulness to the MRRD specifically and the government generally for the construction of the school. Female beneficiaries, however, were not all of the same mind. Another beneficiary asserted that the project only benefited men, and further criticized the DDA’s lack of projects targeting women.

*“The project does not belong to women. The school was built for males and, in my opinion, the DDA doesn’t solve the women problems. Last year the DDA promised us to implement a tailoring project for women, but so far hey haven’t implemented any thing like that.”*  
– Female beneficiary

### **(3) Sustainability**

Though respondents noted issues with water pipes and the lack of electricity, all beneficiaries contended that the structural integrity of the building was secure and sustainable.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Female beneficiaries, while holding positive views about the project itself, remained completely unaware of the DDA’s involvement in the project. They believed that the CDC selected and implemented the project despite the Ministry of Education’s disapproval of the project. The field team was unable to determine the source of the female beneficiaries’ opinion, and was further unable to support the claim regarding the Ministry of Education. Despite new attempts to clarify this point, in early 2013, the contradictory opinions of the community members and the local Department of Education have not allowed the review team to make its own final judgment.

This misinformation represented the extent of female beneficiaries’ lack of awareness of the NABDP program. They contended that they had not heard of elections for the DDA, saying only that *“every village selections one of their elders or educated persons as a representative to the DDA.”* Female beneficiaries did not know whether or not there were female representatives on the DDA, but noted that, if there were female DDA members, those members should come to the community members home and speak directly to the district’s women in order to fulfill their role as female representatives. Despite their lack of familiarity with the NABDP program, female beneficiaries nonetheless believed that the DDA’s elections must have been fair and transparent and that the DDA was a sustainable entity working for the people on behalf of the government. Male beneficiaries also reported positive views of the DDA despite their lack of familiarity with the NABDP.

Interestingly, the female beneficiaries were very knowledgeable about the functions and processes of CDCs, noting that CDCs were their first source of conflict resolution outside of the home. Field teams reported that this was likely due to both the more localized nature of the NSP as well as the CDC’s longer-term presence in the community.

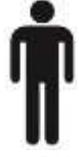
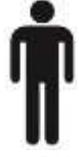
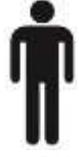
## Provincial Profile: Helmand

Female interviewers were unable to travel to Helmand’s districts due to high security risks. As a result, two focus groups were conducted with women within the capital city.

**Site 1:** Construction of RRD Office  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Lashkargah  
**Village(s):** Center (in Karte Lagan)  
**Date Visited:** August 14, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** December 9, 2009  
**End Date:** September 10, 2010  
**Budget:** 499,457 USD  
**Donor:** DFID  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 59,935

Overall Site Indicators			
Community Involvement and Awareness	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">             UNKNOWN         </td> <td style="text-align: center;">             HIGH         </td> </tr> </table>	 UNKNOWN	 HIGH
 UNKNOWN	 HIGH		
Observation of Project’s Structure	No structural issues		
Impression of the DDA	Not Applicable		

### Project Overview

Respondents were all RRD employees and held a strongly positive view of the project’s implementation as well as the NABDP program as a whole. While not all respondents were consulted during the prioritization and selection process, they felt that the process was both fair and beneficial to the provincial office’s staff as well as programming.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Field teams interviewed six male beneficiaries from the NABDP and RRD employees in Helmand. A natural bias was evident as the RRD staff members were reluctant to criticize their own department’s work. Nonetheless, interviewees provided some useful input about the project prioritization and selection process. Half of the respondents, despite working at the ministry for up to three years, were completely unaware of the project’s selection and implementation. While all felt that the project’s prioritization process was fair and transparent, several acknowledged that it was a venture that remained primarily within the NABDP and that disregarded outside consultation.

A female beneficiary focus group was not conducted because too few women worked in the MRRD who used the building; likewise, a non-beneficiary focus group was not conducted because, according to both the NABDP and other RRD staff, everyone who worked for the RRD office benefited from the building’s construction.

## **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Field teams observed that two three-store buildings were constructed with high-quality materials including brick, cement and steel bars. The electrical and air conditioning system were in good working condition. In addition to the two buildings, two other structures (a mosque and parking lot) were created for MRRD employees.

*“When we moved from one building to another, all of our chairs and tables were broken. Now, the RRD in Helmand has built a building for us so that we can easily benefit [from it] and use it.”*

– Male beneficiary

The interviewees confirmed that the building was structurally sound and further indicated that the project provided the provincial team with several benefits, including new and more spacious offices as well as functioning chairs and tables.

One male beneficiary emphasized that the building’s construction not only assisted the RRD staff, but also assisted local people by improving the provincial office’s programming as well as providing short-term employment in the construction sector for the laborers.

*“The poor people who worked in the construction of this building could easily earn their family’s bread for the day.”*

– Male beneficiary

Interestingly, beneficiaries further asserted that youth and women benefited from the construction, though the field team observed neither youth nor women working in the building. The methodology for determining the number of beneficiaries remains unclear.

## **(3) Sustainability**

Respondents believed the project was highly sustainable, with some predicting that the project would last up to 200 years. They did not believe it required any significant maintenance and were generally very optimistic about its sustainability.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

The respondents (RRD employees) held positive impressions of the DDA. All but one had participated in DDA elections though none were reportedly CDC members, rendering their stated participation in the electoral process unclear. The respondents were nonetheless knowledgeable about the DDA’s election process and structure, and stated several facts about DDA members, including their term limits and general responsibilities.

Respondents generally preferred their community elders as their first source of conflict resolution. If their elders (often coinciding with CDC members) and district governor were unable to resolve the issue, respondents said they would then approach their local DDA for assistance. While their opinions of the DDA were positive, respondents acknowledged the complexities of villagers’ perceptions. Their positive impressions, one respondent stated, was directly dependent upon whether or not the NABDP implemented projects in their village. Without implementing projects, *“the people aren’t encouraged to have a good relationship with the government.”*

**Site 2:** Boring of a Shallow Well  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Lashkargah  
**Village(s):** Dawlat Khan Kochi  
**Date Visited:** August 16, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** July 5, 2011  
**End Date:** December 25, 2011  
**Budget:** 33,896 USD  
**Donor:** Denmark  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,068

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

Impressions of the project were very positive, with several beneficiaries citing specific examples of how the project had improved their and their family's livelihood. Notably, the village elders – in both the beneficiary and non-beneficiary villages – actively lobby the DDA to implement projects in their area.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Respondents were generally aware of the project prioritization and selection process, noting that a small number of DDA members had consulted them about the possibility of constructing a well in their village. The village and its neighbors have benefited from small bridges, a flood protection wall, and several water pumps. Village elders, who form the local CDC, actively lobby the DDA for projects to be implemented in their village and, as a result, are generally consulted during the project selection process. The male beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries interviewed felt this process was fair and transparent. Non-beneficiaries noted that the DDA had also implemented several other projects that benefited them.

Male beneficiaries believed that their discussions with the DDA and informal approval of the project directly led to the project's implementation, which they said helped further bring employment opportunities to unemployed men in the area. While the area is generally insecure, the village rallied to guarantee that the well's construction occurred without a breach to security. They highly valued the project's prioritization and explained that *"there wasn't a project more important than this because people can't live without water and, before [the well's construction] there wasn't enough water in this area."*

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Field teams observed that the community utilized the shallow well not only as a source of clean drinking water, but also to wash clothes, clean dishes and bathe. The field team observed several individuals using the well for various activities, and determined nearby villages used it on a daily basis. Prior to the project's construction, male beneficiaries

explained that women in the village were required to carry water three to four kilometers because there was no clean water nearby. One male beneficiary explained that, even though they traveled far to carry the water, the water the women often gathered was unclean and caused illnesses.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Field teams did not observe any technical or structural issues with the project, observing that the project was well constructed to meet the needs of the community in a sustainable manner.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

While non-beneficiaries have benefited from DDA projects in the past, they noted that the needs of their village and neighboring villages remained high. They requested that the DDA provide their communities with a clinic, school, water tank, and deep well, emphasizing that the closest clinic is more than 30 kilometers away and that there is no school in their immediate area. While the non-beneficiaries noted that their community was given a deep well from an unknown organization, the well was not built sustainably and often requires repairs.

Regardless of their additional requests, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries held positive opinions of the DDA, with one respondent explaining that the *“DDA has been selected by the people and it will work hard to solve people’s problems.”*



*Picture 6: Beneficiary at site in Kandahar*

**Site 3:** Cleaning of Karez  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Garm Ser  
**Village(s):** Darwishan  
**Date Visited:** August 15, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** April 10, 2008  
**End Date:** July 9, 2008  
**Budget:** 36,854 USD  
**Donor:** DFID  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,422

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	Urgent maintenance required	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

The Karez technology is a type of underground irrigation canal running between an aquifer (underground water source) on the piedmont (mountain or higher elevation) to a garden on an arid plain. It is used most extensively in areas with an absence of larger rivers with year-round flows sufficient to support irrigation. They are common when potentially fertile areas are close to precipitation-rich mountains or mountain ranges, and when the climate is arid and has a high surface evaporation rate. In the surveyed community, the project, nicknamed the “Zaber’ Project” by local villagers, reportedly improved the community’s agricultural activities. Since it was last cleaned in 2008, however, the community has lobbied for another cleaning of the Karez, explaining that they lacked the resources to maintain the project themselves. The community’s calls remain unanswered, leaving the 2008 cleaning a one-time occurrence and the project in dire need of maintenance. The beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries expressed conflicting views over the DDA, with some holding a positive impression of the group and others believing the DDA to be plagued with corruption and village favoritism.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

One male beneficiary explained that the Karez cleaning came as a surprise to his village as the NABDP typically implemented energy-based projects in their village. As no rural energy development projects are listed within the NABDP’s project directory, it is likely that the respondent mistook the DDA for the local CDC or another entity. Other male beneficiaries, like the respondent cited above, were unaware of the project prioritization process apart from being able to list the MRRD as the primary responsible actor. The respondents did assert that, despite having little knowledge of the selection process, they were satisfied with the process utilized because it realized positive infrastructure development in their village. They believed that the project was the most relevant project that could have been implemented in their village, and radically improved the livelihoods of the local population.

## (2) Project Implementation and Outcomes

Field teams reported that the cleaning occurred over the course of 11 kilometers in nine different villages. Male beneficiaries reported that the cleaning had significantly improved their harvests. The NABDP cleaned the canal in early 2008 in order to encourage the local villagers' agricultural activities. Teams did not report any technical or structural issues, but noted that the Karez had returned and the canal required additional cleaning.

## (3) Sustainability

The respondents believed that the Karez was conducted well, and was sustainable. They expressed to the field teams that, while the Taliban had also implemented a cleaning system in the village, the project was poorly implemented and soon disintegrated. One male respondent, however, believed that the cleaning was not only unsustainable, but also poorly done.

*"The Zaber had been cleaned during the Taliban's time. The Taliban was strong and had a lot of power. A project that should have been implemented in a month was implemented in just five days by the Taliban."*

– Male beneficiary

Another male beneficiary agreed, explaining that the Zaber had been cleaned four years ago but was no longer clean. He explained that the local people, due to their poor financial situation, were unable to maintain the cleaning or re-clean of the area. Respondents repeatedly noted that the drainage had to be cleaned again, but they did not have the resources to do so.

## Impressions of the DDA

Respondents held favorable views of the DDA and reported it to be sustainable and fairly elected. Some respondents mentioned that they themselves had participated in DDA elections, and often used the CDCs and DDAs to resolve their conflicts. The beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries believed that the DDA was representative of the people, including youth. Male beneficiaries believed that there were no women on the DDA because *"we don't let our women work outside because this area is very dangerous."* One respondent noted that, while representative, there is an inevitable element of tribal and political favoritism and that *"people use their own authority and power in Afghanistan."* This statement sparked a discussion between three focus group participants, who contended that corruption within the DDA produced poor quality projects because DDA members were either taking money for themselves from the projects' budgets or they were redirecting projects to take place in their villages.



*Picture 7: Site constructed in Kabul*

**Site 4:** Cleaning of canal  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Garm Ser  
**Village(s):** Meyanjasti  
**Date Visited:** August 15, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** April 10, 2008  
**End Date:** July 9, 2008  
**Budget:** 5,400 USD  
**Donor:** DFID  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 648

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

Not unlike the Karez cleaning in Darwishan, the project implemented in Meyanjasti was perceived positively but required maintenance that the community was unable to provide.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

The beneficiaries interviewed, while not consulted during the project prioritization and selection process, believed that the process was fair, transparent and inclusive. By consulting their local CDC and village elders, the beneficiaries believed that the DDA had successfully evaluated the village's priority needs. Because the villagers selected the DDA members, the respondents believed that they were indirectly involved in all DDA consultations.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

The beneficiaries believed that the project positively benefited their community, providing cleaner water for drinking and washing clothes in addition to the intended use of improving agricultural activities. By cleaning the drainage, the DDA increased the water's ability to flow without issue, thereby allowing farmers to take better advantage of the canal for irrigation.

**(3) Sustainability**

The beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries both said that the project was unsustainable, and required an urgent re-cleaning in time for the upcoming harvest. The beneficiaries lamented their inability to clean the canal themselves, and explained that the build up from the last few years would negatively affect their harvest. They said that they did not understand why the DDA would not re-clean the canal, explaining that the DDA had far more resources at its disposal than their village.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

The respondents held positive impressions of the DDA, believing that the DDA was highly cooperative and *“fairly represent[ed] the district.”* The respondents lamented the district’s poor security, explaining that the DDA implemented projects that improved villagers’ lives but, due to poor security in many of the district’s villages, the DDA was forced to limit its programming to secure villages. The respondents were knowledgeable about the functions of the DDA, explaining that the DDA worked in cooperation with the local CDCs to attain information about a village’s safety. The beneficiary village was represented by one person on the DDA, someone who the respondents believed lobbied for projects to be implemented in their village and the neighboring village. The field team was unable to reach the DDA member, but was told by beneficiaries that he helped implement projects to clean drainage, dig wells, and construct bridges in several nearby villages. These projects, respondents said, greatly improved their lives.



*Picture 8: Local Deh Sabz District Information Center in Kabul*

**Site 5:** Education of Tailoring  
**Sector:** Local Economic Development  
**Location:** Lashkargah  
**Village(s):** Tor Tang  
**Date Visited:** August 15, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** December 26, 2010  
**End Date:** July 21, 2011  
**Budget:** 34,520 USD  
**Donor:** Denmark  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,142

Overall Site Indicators	
Community Involvement and Awareness	 <b>MEDIUM</b>
Impression of the training provided	<b>Positive</b>
Impression of the DDA	<b>Positive</b>

**Project Overview**

The project was implemented only for a small number of women, so male beneficiary and non-beneficiary focus groups were not conducted. The women were very positive about the DDA and the training they received, believing both to have produced positive change in their lives – both socially and economically.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

The female beneficiaries were not involved in the prioritization of the project. However, they were very satisfied with the process and noted that the UNDP and MRRD’s efforts to support the DDA in its support to women in the area were commendable. They felt that the process was both fair and transparent, correctly prioritizing the needs of the community.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Women repeatedly stated that the project benefited them greatly, noting that it was both a unique experience for them to leave their homes and be around other women who were not related to them as well as to learn a useful skill.

*“We live in a traditional society where females are not allowed to go out most of the time. This project has helped us solve our problems and meet our necessities on our own. It was an outstanding project...”*

– Female beneficiary

Two women emphasized that the training, by providing useful tailoring skills and machinery, allowed them to improve their family’s economic situation whilst still within the safe and socially appropriate confines of their homes.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Female beneficiaries explained that the project was very sustainable. They noted that, since they had the knowledge from the training, all they needed to do was maintain the tools given to them by the DDA. Given that all were actively earning an income from tailoring work, they felt that such maintenance would not be an issue

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Women spoke very highly of the DDA, explaining that the DDA had helped them tremendously by implementing a program specifically for women. They stated that the DDA was *“working very hard for people...always at the service of people usually to solve their disputes,”* as well as *“very active and intelligent.”* Though women had little knowledge of the NABDP program itself, they held a very positive opinion of it, explaining that it had brought about a large change in their lives and hoped that the DDAs created would be sustainable. While women were generally unaware of the local DDA, they had become more aware after the training and noted that, in the future, they would participate in DDA elections and would keep updated about potential projects to benefit women and the rest of their community.

**Site 6:** Training of Basic Business Development  
**Sector:** Local Economic Development  
**Location:** Lashkargah  
**Village(s):** Tor Tang  
**Date Visited:** August 16, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** March 8, 2008  
**End Date:** September 4, 2008  
**Budget:** 20,000 USD  
**Donor:** DFID  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,142

Overall Site Indicators	
Community Involvement and Awareness	 <b>LOW</b>
Impression of the training provided	<b>Positive</b>
Impression of the DDA	<b>Positive</b>

**Project Overview**

There were no male beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries to interview. While women were not aware of the project prioritization or selection process and had little knowledge of the DDA, they benefited greatly from the project. They had very positive impressions of the DDA and the project’s implementation.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Women were again not involved in the project’s selection but indicated no desire to be part of the process. They explained that the DDA worked in the interest of the community and, as the elected representatives of the community, they had the full authority to choose and implement projects on behalf of the people based on their perceptions of the people’s needs. They felt that the project was selected according to people’s consent, contending that, while they themselves may not have been asked, it is likely that others (such as the men living in their village) were consulted during the process.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Female beneficiaries were very satisfied with the project’s implementation and outcomes, noting that they had a wonderful teacher and felt that they learned a great deal about business management. Women explained that their households’ economic situation improved after the training and that they understood basic methods of running a successful business in tailoring that were applicable other potential business endeavors. They said that they felt empowered and capable of bringing change to their own lives and to their families’ lives. One woman explained that, by being able to provide for her children’s expenses, she felt more independent and less stressed.

**(3) Sustainability**

Respondents felt that the project was sustainable in so far as it was knowledge-based. They felt that they learned a great deal which they could apply in their daily lives and future

endeavors.

**Impressions of the DDA**

Women held positive impressions of the DDA, explaining that the DDA had provided them with an invaluable service in a society in which they would have otherwise been disregarded. One woman emphasized that if there were problems (though there were no delays or issues with the training) she could easily approach the DDA for assistance.

# Provincial Profile: Herat

**Site 1:** Construction of Administrative Building  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Herat City (NABDP Office)  
**Village(s):** Center  
**Date Visited:** August 5, 2012

## Project Overview

**Start Date:** December 10, 2009  
**End Date:** August 2, 2011  
**Budget:** 13,136 USD  
**Donor:** Denmark  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 1,576

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Not Applicable	

The NABDP had too few female employees at the time of the visit to conduct a female focus groups. Furthermore, due to the unique nature of the project, there were no non-beneficiaries interviewed.

## Project Overview

The respondents were all NABDP employees, and spoke positively about the project's construction. The field team observed no major structural issues, though the outdoor staircase leading to the second floor was considered precariously built. Steps' heights varied in length, and the side railings were not sturdy. Local community representatives were also interviewed and showed a relatively good understanding of what the NABDP's objectives were.

### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

It is unclear how the project was prioritized and selected. Because the NABDP itself does not fall under any DDA group, the decision to construct the NABDP office falls under the office of the actual NABDP office.

### **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

The beneficiaries were all satisfied with the project's construction, noting no structural issues. Field teams, however, reported that the outdoor staircase appeared unstable and uneven.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Field teams and beneficiaries both reported that they believed the project was sustainable – especially thanks to: 1) NABDP employees, who show a strong attachment to the new

infrastructure; 2) local communities who have understood the benefits they could indirectly get from the NABDP office, after in-depth discussions with NABDP employees.

**Impressions of the DDA**

All of those interviewed were both knowledgeable about the DDA system and held positive impressions regarding it. However, as the project was not under the jurisdiction of a DDA itself, the beneficiaries were not asked to expand on their impressions.

**Site 2:** Graveling of Tertiary Road  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Herat City  
**Village(s):** Jalwardi  
**Date Visited:** August 2, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** March 18, 2010  
**End Date:** September 18, 2010  
**Budget:** 53,904 USD  
**Donor:** UNDP  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 6,468

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	Structural issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

Female beneficiaries felt women in the community were marginalized by the DDA, an assertion not shared by male beneficiaries. Generally, both groups held positive opinions of the DDA and the implemented project, noting that the project had greatly improved their access to other villages and cities.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female beneficiaries were not involved in the project prioritization and selection process. Though they stated that the local community (represented by men) was involved in the project, they themselves were not involved and had no knowledge of the parties responsible for the process.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Beneficiaries stated that the project had improved their livelihoods, making it easier to travel from one location in the village to another location outside of the village.

Female beneficiaries asserted that the project improved the area's social and economic status, making it easier for farmers to sell their products outside of the village and for men and women in the community go to universities outside of the village.

*"In the past, we had many problems because the road had been completely destroyed. When cars were passing on the road, there was too much dust on the road for them to continue. People who lived near the road also had many problems. The workers couldn't reach the cities, the cars couldn't pass on the road, and the farmers couldn't carry their goods."*

– Female beneficiary

### **(3) Sustainability**

The beneficiaries did not think the project was sustainable. Heavy trucks from neighboring villages pass by on the road, slowly damaging the road, which was not designed to handle such large loads. One beneficiary stated that the project would last four or five years at most, and field teams observed several pockets of damaged road just two years after its completed construction date.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Female beneficiaries explained that the first source of conflict resolution outside of the home remains the CDC. If the CDC is unable to resolve a conflict, the CDC itself approaches the DDA for assistance. This process is both common and well respected in the village, with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries asserting that the DDA acts fairly and transparently. Interestingly, the local malek emphasized the need for the UNDP's active involvement in the NABDP program to both monitor projects (thereby reducing corruption) and provide technical assistance and guidance to help build the NABDP's capacity.

Female beneficiaries nonetheless noted that, while they benefited from the projects, they were never asked for their opinions about the projects. They were not consulted during the project selection process and felt that the DDA often failed to incorporate women. Female beneficiaries felt that *"women don't benefit from the projects as much as men...[and that] the DDA doesn't focus on women's needs or work to improve women's livelihoods."* Men disagreed, stating that women were benefiting as much as their male counterparts. They highlighted the number of women on the DDA, emphasizing that the female DDA members *"represented all women"* and were a primary source of conflict resolution among women.

The male beneficiaries were generally very positive about the DDA, believing it to be a sustainable entity that fairly represented all facets of the district. The only weakness they believed the DDA suffered from was their reliance on the MRRD, noting that the DDA should be able to petition international organizations and the government directly for projects. (The DDAs are, in fact, able to do this and have been awarded private contracts by international organizations in, for instance, Enjil District of Herat.)

**Site 3:** Construction of Micro-Hydro Power Plants  
**Sector:** Rural Energy Development  
**Location:** Karrukh  
**Village(s):** Haji Saeed Ahmad, Majghandak 1 & 5, Qala-e-Bala, Tahiriha Ab Rahman  
**Date Visited:** August 3, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** March 18, 2010  
**End Date:** September 18, 2010  
**Budget:** 229,104 (for five plants)  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 5,467 (for five plants)

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Community members accused the village leaders of utilizing more electricity than the rest of the community without paying for it, leaving other families with limited access to the project's benefits. The project itself appeared structurally sound though the village appeared unable to maintain or repair the project without external support.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female and male beneficiaries believed the project prioritization and selection process was fair, noting that the project was addressing a major need in the village.

Non-beneficiaries disagreed, claiming that the project selection process was neither fair nor transparent. They further noted that they had never participated in an election for a project or for the DDA itself.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Beneficiaries were satisfied with the project's outcome, noting that the project *"helped the poor people in our village,"* although female beneficiaries emphasized what they perceived to be the unfair nature of the project's implementation. Female beneficiaries said that the project felt like it wasn't implemented at all because most families were unable to use enough electricity to light their homes or turn on their televisions. They claimed that most of the electricity was being used by DDA members' households, leaving little capacity for other households. One female beneficiary noted that the only time she is able to light more than a single bulb for a few hours was during the winter, when the water increased.

*"I think that the community leader and other elders use the electricity more than other people without paying."*

– Female beneficiaries

Our field team visited the village malek's home and observed that the malek had more electronic items than the two other homes visited.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries noted no structural issues with the project, but our field teams observed that the live-in guard and maintenance worker was unaware of how to repair the micro-hydro power plant. As it stands, the taxes for electricity usage are primarily used to pay the worker's monthly salary. Excessive taxes are supposed to be saved in the event of an emergency repair. Two issues were observed. Firstly, the village malek reported the worker's monthly salary as higher than the worker himself stated, raising suspicion that either the malek or worker was dishonest. Secondly, no one, including the village malek, could state where the excessive tax funds were kept.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Non-beneficiaries, though represented on the DDA, had staunchly negative views about the DDA, explaining that projects had not been implemented in their village because of nepotism. Non-beneficiaries claimed that the head of the DDA did not want projects to be implemented outside of his village and neighboring village. They highlighted several projects implemented near Majghandak and its surrounding villages, where the head of the DDA resides, emphasizing that their village had not yet seen any projects implemented to their benefit. The non-beneficiaries further highlighted the political complexities between DDA members, noting that *"some of them have deep enmity between each other"* due to past political affiliations.

Male and female beneficiaries held positive views of the DDA, noting that they felt the DDA was working for the benefit of all people in the district. While female beneficiaries noted that several projects targeting women had been implemented, they expressed a need and desire for such projects to be implemented in their village. They stated that they had spoken to female DDA members, who they believed were easily approachable, about the possibility of introducing female-specific projects in their village.

Female beneficiaries in particular praised the head of the DDA, who lived in their village, for his attention to the village's infrastructure needs. The field team's interview with the head of the DDA, however, revealed several contradictions regarding women's roles and project distribution in the district. For instance, it appeared that more projects were concentrated in his village than in other villages. Similarly, the DDA successfully sought aid and training programs outside of the NABDP, but it appeared that only the head of the DDA's village was again benefiting from this venture.

**Site 4:** Construction of Protection Wall  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Karrukh  
**Village(s):** Qala-e-Bala  
**Date Visited:** August 4, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** August 21, 2011  
**End Date:** December 25, 2011  
**Budget:** 121,559  
**Donor:** UNDP  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 14,587

Overall Site Indicators			
Community Involvement and Awareness	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">   <b>LOW</b> </td> <td style="text-align: center;">   <b>HIGH</b> </td> </tr> </table>	 <b>LOW</b>	 <b>HIGH</b>
 <b>LOW</b>	 <b>HIGH</b>		
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues		
Impression of the DDA	Varied		

**Project Overview**

Beneficiaries held positive views of the project and DDA while non-beneficiaries' held strikingly opposite perceptions. Non-beneficiaries believed that the DDA was corrupt and only worked to benefit its own villages, leaving other villages without adequate representation and development projects.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

The beneficiaries noted that the male villagers were involved in the project selection process and benefited from RRD oversight. Male beneficiaries were aware of the various actors involved in the NABDP project and, though not all were consulted during the process, they felt satisfied with the NABDP's cooperation with the villagers.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Prior to the project's implementation, villagers feared that floods would destroy their homes and agricultural land. Beneficiaries explained that, after the construction of the protection wall, *"the people [were] mentally relaxed."* Male and female beneficiaries repeatedly emphasized that the protection wall improved their livelihoods by protecting their lands. They observed no issues with the quality of the structure itself, which was confirmed by the field team's observations.

**(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries thought the project would be sustainable granted that no surprising natural disasters occur. One beneficiary noted that the protection wall was so well built that it could last up to 40 years. Opinions differed drastically, however, as another beneficiary claimed that the project couldn't last another five years without extensive external support. The field team observed no structural faults, but emphasized the need for regular maintenance.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries held positive views of the DDA, believing that the DDA acted as a bridge between communities and the government regardless of whether or not it was able to implement projects in a given location. They believed that the DDA acted as an organ of the government that resolved community members' conflicts in a non-discriminatory fashion. According to both female and male beneficiaries, female membership on the DDA was vital to ensuring its fairness. Female beneficiaries noted that female DDA members *"knew the problems of women and can get projects to solve those problems."*

Non-beneficiaries, however, stated that the DDA members are not representative of the district, *"working only for themselves and to their own advantage."* The group contended that the DDA did not work *"honestly"* and was overrun with corruption and nepotism.



*Picture 9: Paitara Protection wall in Kabul*

## Provincial Profile: Kabul

**Site 1:** Construction of School Building  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Farza  
**Village(s):** District Center  
**Date Visited:** August 29, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** July 9, 2008  
**End Date:** February 27, 2010  
**Budget:** 251,845 USD  
**Donor:** DIAG  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 30,221

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	Structural issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

### Project Overview

While both male and female beneficiaries' high level of understanding and positive perceptions of the DDA were indicative of positive collaboration, the beneficiaries were not satisfied with the project's construction. They contended that the project had several structural issues, which were confirmed by the field team's observation of missing doors and tables as well as the lack of heaters and running water for children.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male beneficiaries were very aware of the project prioritization and selection process. They stated the approximate budget of the project and its donor, stating that they were strongly in favor of building the school for the community. While female beneficiaries were not consulted in the process, they contended that they were also in favor of the project's selection, noting that all people in the village would benefit from its construction.

When asked why the donor chose the project, they explained that the DIAG fund wanted to thank the local residents for "*giving up their weapons.*" The local villagers had the option of building either a park or a school, and the majority of participants in the consultation process voted in favor of building a school. The local population was thus satisfied with the project's selection process and felt well incorporated into the decision making process.

#### **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male beneficiaries were unsatisfied with the project's outcome. They noted several structural issues with the project, including missing doors, lack of water for children, and unclean facilities. They believed that for a project with such a large budget, the school should have been both bigger and better built, a failure they blamed on the NABDP

program's engineer. The believed that the NABDP engineer did not attempt to address the structural issues the male beneficiaries highlighted during the engineer's visits to the site.

Beneficiaries further contended that the NABDP must have failed to address the issue because the project was contracted out to a powerful construction company that "no one can counter", due to its relationships within the Karzai government. They believed that the NABDP and the local people were unable to influence the contracted construction company, providing the pretext for the company to employ poor-quality building practices with impunity.

*"The project was controlled by an engineer who said he had a lot of experience. He came once a week and we complained again and again [about issues we noticed] and he did nothing. We tried to ask for his help, but he refused to help us for some reason."*

– Male beneficiary

The male beneficiaries noted that they were satisfied with the MRRD itself and thanked the MRRD for implementing the project while maintaining, that the project was poorly built.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries did not think the project was sustainable. The project is in use now, but beneficiaries complained about structural issues and believed that the building would not last more than a few years. Field teams were equally pessimistic, highlighted several key structural issues (based on the observation of the isolation system, electricity, toilets, windows, concrete) and noted that the building was not suitable to serve as an educational facility. Lacking other options, families had no choice but to send their children to the school for an education, but field teams believed that the school building would nonetheless not survive long.



*Picture 10: New school in Balkh*

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries held positive opinions of the DDA. Many male beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries had participated in the DDA's election and were familiar with the DDA's structure and with some of its members. Male beneficiaries, for instance, repeatedly noted the DDA's positive impact on the government's relationship with the

people because of the latter's development projects and the accompanying employment opportunities.

*"The relationship between the government and people has become better, because the people see that they have constructed a school and a clinic and implemented other development projects. The important thing is that, when projects start, people get busy working which decreases problems."*

– Male beneficiary

Male beneficiaries explained that women are adequately and fairly represented in the DDA, a statement confirmed by female beneficiaries. While the latter did not reportedly vote in DDA elections, they felt that the *"selection process of the DDA has been completely transparent because its representatives pay attention to the people,"* and provide them with development projects, including tailoring projects. Female beneficiaries felt that women on the DDA were well represented and played an important role in the DDA's work.

All those interviewed indicated a preference for conflict resolution to occur at the family or CDC-level, believing that cases should only be taken to the DDA if they were first unable to be resolved at lower levels.

**Site 2:** Construction of Community Center  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Bagrami  
**Village(s):** District Center  
**Date Visited:** August 28, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** February 23, 2009  
**End Date:** February 27, 2010  
**Budget:** 128,876 USD  
**Donor:** DIAG  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 15,465

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

The community elders and male residents were using the project as a site of informal and formal meetings to address the village's issues. While female beneficiaries rarely used the location, the DDA attempted to find a location that was accessible to female residents but was unable to do so. Nonetheless, regardless of their limited knowledge of the DDA and the project, the female beneficiaries seemed satisfied with both. Non-beneficiaries, on the other hand, were unaware that a DDA existed and accused their local malek (later determined to be a DDA member) of corruption.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male beneficiaries were well aware of the project's prioritization and selection process. They further understood the objectives of the donor, and stated that local villagers who were former insurgents (with a Mujahideen faction) reintegrated into Afghan society, thus sparking DIAG to fund the project's implementation. The actual details of the beneficiaries' claims were unable to be verified, but it is nonetheless notable that male beneficiaries expressed this understanding. Male beneficiaries appeared to be consulted several times during the project's selection and implementation. They noted that the DDA had inquired about possible areas to construct the project where women would have access to it. According to male beneficiaries, the DDA held several meetings in the village elder's home and the local mosque, leaving the door open for all community members to partake in the process. Male beneficiaries lamented that women did not have access to buildings in the district, but that the DDA was unable to find another location suitable for the center.

Unaware of the existence of a DDA in the area, female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were not consulted during the project selection process and noted that they were not aware of the project until construction began.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

While female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were again unaware of the project's

implementation (with many of them never having had entered the community center), the male beneficiaries emphasized that the project had a positive outcome for the whole community. One male beneficiary recounted a story in which the community center was used by community leaders and male residents to resolve a girl's kidnapping.

*"A few days ago, someone had kidnapped a girl and the people had a lot of problems and the problems were solved in this community center. If there is found any problem between the people, it is solved in this community center and it is a good place."*

– Male beneficiary

Male beneficiaries hoped that, in addition to using the area as a meeting place for male community members, they hoped that the location would also be used for a wedding hall. The beneficiaries, however, noted that this would not be possible due to its location in the district center.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Male and female beneficiaries were optimistic about the building's sustainability. One male beneficiary noted initial skepticism when, during construction, "suddenly its ceiling was destroyed," but noted that the head of the DDA's quick respond to the situation by employing a different contractor demonstrated clear oversight and direct action. The same male beneficiary noted that he later felt the project was highly sustainable, and would continue to benefit the community into the far future.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

While female beneficiaries displayed little knowledge regarding the DDA, male beneficiaries displayed an impressive understanding of the NABDP program. They were aware of projects that had been implemented by the DDA in other villages, many had participated in the DDA as part of their CDCs, and others had spoken to the DDA regarding specific projects implemented. The male beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the DDA's work and believed it to be *"representative of the whole people without consideration to political and tribal favoritism in project implementation."*

Non-beneficiaries accused their local malek of corruption, explaining that *"there were many projects but our malek did not implement all of them for us and instead took half of the project's funding for himself."* The non-beneficiaries did not believe a DDA existed in the area, and were only familiar with the local CDC, which their village's malek was leading. The non-beneficiaries thus had no impression to share with field teams regarding a DDA but, given their poor impressions of the CDC and the malek, they were not confident that a DDA would act any differently. They hoped, however, that the creation of a DDA would help produce some of the projects they wanted implemented in their village, such as a women's tailoring and literacy project.

**Site 3:** Construction of Community Center  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Deh Sabz  
**Village(s):** Tara Kheil  
**Date Visited:** August 2, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** September 22, 2010  
**End Date:** December 21, 2010  
**Budget:** 23,870 USD  
**Donor:** DIAG  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 2,864

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

NABDP documentation lists the construction of two community centers in Deh Sabz, one located in Tara Kheil and the other in the District Center. However, the field team was only able to locate one community center (in Tara Kheil). The local DDA and NABDP head of office confirmed the finding, explaining that only one had been built.

**Project Overview**

While field teams expected to find a safe space for all community members to gather, they instead found a guarded facility used as DDA offices. Beneficiaries living nearby the community center reported never having used the center, and asserting that the center was not a place for the people.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Non-beneficiaries and female beneficiaries repeatedly noted that the project prioritization and selection process was not fair. The former claimed that the DDA was overrun with tribal favoritism, and that the DDA members limited support to their villages and their families whenever possible. They cited the current project as a prime example of the issue, explaining that the project was meant for the community but was only used by the DDA. While the non-beneficiaries said that the project was constructed well, they felt it was unfair that projects had not yet been implemented in their community.

Beneficiaries stated that they had been involved in the project selection process. They believed the process was fair and transparent and could have produced a positive space for the community.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Beneficiaries did not believe the project's outcome was in the interest of the community. One female beneficiary, for instance, explained that "the center is not good because...no one can benefit from the center. Men and women are searched [by guards] each time they enter the center." The beneficiaries explained that the community did not use the center.

Instead, the DDA had appropriated it into an office for their own programming and employed armed guards discouraging individuals from entering the facility. The beneficiaries said that they wanted to use the center, and they felt it was a particularly good space for women and children to gather if they were given the opportunity to do so. Several females explained that they had no knowledge of the center because they relied on others for information.

Other beneficiaries emphasized that strict cultural restrictions prevented women from leaving their homes without risking domestic violence; they thus felt that, even if they had the opportunity to use the center, they would not be allowed to do so by their families. One female beneficiary noted that, despite the diverse ethnic community in the area, Pashtuns were most likely to use the center. Another mentioned that the project failed to alleviate poverty or benefit the people; she noted that an electricity project would have been more useful in the area. Yet another explained that the project, as far as she had seen it, had no impact on the lives of the community.

*“The centre hasn't brought us anything. We are not benefiting from it. We don't know what's going on there; nobody has said anything to us.”*

– Female beneficiary

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries expressed mixed views about the project's sustainability. While the field team reported that the project displayed no structural faults and appeared well constructed, the beneficiaries noted that the DDA did not have the funds to maintain and repair the buildings. Buildings inevitably require upkeep, beneficiaries stated, and the DDA would not be able to *“take care of the project without any external support.”*



*Picture 10: Qarabagh home in Kabul*

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Interestingly, despite the non-beneficiaries accusation of nepotism within the DDA, they did not report the desire to bring about any changes to the DDA itself. They instead implored the field team to ask the DDA to build a road or water reservoir in their village, mentioning that such projects were more crucial than an electricity project the DDA promised to implement but had not yet done so.

None of the female beneficiary interviewed participated in DDA elections and many stated that the elections must not have been conducted transparently. Beneficiaries generally held

a poor opinion of the DDA, preferring the CDC to the DDA but still utilizing the DDA as a source of conflict resolution. One female beneficiary, however, held a very positive view of the DDA and felt that it was a necessary entity that improved the community's relationship with the government through its projects.

**Site 4:** Construction of Protection Wall (location of intensive pilot test)  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Qarabagh  
**Village(s):** Paitawa  
**Date Visited:** July 30, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** August 17, 2010  
**End Date:** January 15, 2011  
**Budget:** 26,688 USD  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,203

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

Field teams reported no structural issues with the protection wall, noting that it had been constructed well without any detectable issues and with a high probability of sustainability. The community agreed, holding positive impressions of the project. Some female beneficiaries had never heard of the project and others were unaware of the DDA, indicating a lack of female involvement in the DDA.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female beneficiaries were unaware of the project prioritization and selection process, a knowledge gap that existed with about half of the interviewed male beneficiaries. Other male beneficiaries, however, noted that their local malek had initially spoke to them about the project's possibility as an informal representative of the DDA. It is unclear how the DDA chose to implement the project in Paitawa given that no community member interviewed indicated lobbying for the project to the DDA. Respondents reported that the DDA did not have any representatives from their village.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

The community was satisfied with the project's implementation. Some female beneficiaries were unaware of the protection wall's existence, noting that they had never seen it nor had anyone told them about it. Other beneficiaries – male and female – emphasized repeatedly the positive effects the protection wall had on their lives, and felt that it protected them from the possibility of flooding. Male beneficiaries asserted that the project had been built well, and that its implementation provided them with temporary employment for almost six months, a welcomed relief approaching the wintertime when seasonal employment is often low and costs are higher.

**(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries and the field team were optimistic about the wall's sustainability, noting no structural faults. The field team reported that the wall had been built strategically in line

with a previous small-scale wall built by an international NGO.

**Impressions of the DDA**

More than half of the respondents had never heard of the DDA, often asking the field teams instead to describe the DDA and its activities. The lack of knowledge was particularly acute among female respondents though male respondents had little to no knowledge as well. As a result, few were able to express an opinion of the DDA. Those who did, however, regarded the DDA positively and thanked them for the projects they implemented both in their village and in other villages. Non-beneficiaries expressed similar opinions, noting that the DDA was successfully fulfilling its responsibility to help all of the poor people in the district regardless of tribal affiliations.

**Site 5: Qarabagh Refugee Housing Project (Aliceghan)**

**Location:** Qarabagh

**Date Visited:** August 1, 2012

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	Several issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Alice-Ghan is a combination of Alice, for Alice Springs in Australia, and Ghan, for Afghan, in recognition of the historical ties between central Australia and Afghanistan<sup>17</sup>. It is also the reflection of the growing focus, since 2002, on return and reintegration of Afghans in their provinces of origin. The solution put forth in Alice-Ghan cost \$10 million dollars, and is still the interest of more funding and more development projects. Initially, this housing project was funded by the Australian Government and managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Care International was the implementing partner assigned to work with UNDP to create a viable community of returnees in the Qarabagh district of Kabul. The project aimed to provide homes to 1400 returnee families and work towards the establishment of a thriving community through livelihood support and community development plans.

Aliceghan remains an important undertaking for UNDP<sup>18</sup>: the project, which received international news attention in mid-2010, is notorious as a development failure in the country. If it did produce over one thousand houses, less than two hundred houses are actually occupied, with families often opting not to move into the facility or moving out whenever possible. Male and female beneficiaries agreed that the lack of available water and sanitation facilities as well as the lack of employment opportunities in the area were primary reasons for their desire to leave the area. Male beneficiaries repeatedly noted that the fund's distribution was poorly allocated and was consumed by unnecessary costs. The community furthermore had no knowledge of the NABDP program and many respondents explained that they had never heard of a DDA – which is perfectly normal since this project was an "added" project planned without any DDA involvement.

Recent efforts have brought solar power to this location, providing electricity at specific locations in the township, including on the main streets, to increase security for its inhabitants at nighttime. The road connecting the township to the city of Kabul has been expanded, with ongoing construction at the time of our last visit in December 2011. As such, progress has been noted, but key lessons remain: the absence of a sustainable water source at the site, disputes with adjacent local communities over ownership of the site, and the lack of employment opportunities in the area contributing to shortcomings of the project in providing a suitable housing alternative for a substantial number of returnee families who have preferred to relocate to Kabul city. Another important weakness of the

<sup>17</sup> Jeremy Kelly. *Afghan project failing in a town called AliceGhan*, The Australian, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, *Lessons Learned Report*, Aliceghan, 1 September 2006 – 31 December 2009.

process is the reported mismanagement by the land allocation commissions and the Government of Afghanistan in ensuring a fair and transparent selection process of beneficiaries.

Aliceghan remains an important case study to feed into existing LAS settlements, which have previously focused unevenly on housing and infrastructure alone. The inclusion of livelihoods and governance activities are key issues to cover. Whether the LAS can be saved is a key question put forth by donors in 2012; in the meantime, UNHCR and UNDP have jointly agreed to test a reintegration strategy on sites like Aliceghan, to turn them into potential reintegration models for the rest of the country<sup>19</sup>. A proper evaluation of this initiative will enable to see whether this is an achievable feat given the challenges highlighted previously.



*Picture 10: A 2-room Qarabagh shelter of the Aliceghan returnee township*

### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

The male and female beneficiaries reported divergent views on which parties were involved in the project selection and implementation process. While several female beneficiaries stated that the UNDP was the main stakeholder in the process with assistance from the MRRD, male beneficiaries actually stated that the project was selected by the MORR and implemented by the UNDP, CARE and the Australian government.

One female beneficiary noted also that the head of the local council, an opaque governance institution that she was unable to describe, as well as several other local community members were involved in the project prioritization and selection process. Another

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, *Map of pilot sites 2012*, February 2012.

beneficiary stated that none of the females in the community were consulted during the process but learned of it through their male counterparts. None of the females mentioned the DDA. Female beneficiaries reported that while the MRRD and UNDP were highly involved in the beginning and cooperated well with the residents in the village, they still failed to produce functioning housing units.

## **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

While there was some disagreement between the female beneficiaries on whether the project selection and implementation was fair and transparent, all females fiercely criticized the project for not yielding any results at the project's end. The houses were not built with a kitchen or toilet, and those community members who had the means were forced to build a kitchen and toilet at their own expense. Female beneficiaries also complained heavily about the inadequate and unsustainable way the houses had been constructed; All houses are vulnerable to heavy rain and high winds because they are built with bricks and mud.

*"The projects have many structural problems; houses don't have toilets and kitchens. They are too small and not sufficient for big families. The substances that have been used in the construction of the houses are not from good quality. The bricks of the houses' walls are destroyed by the rain."*

– Female beneficiary

Male beneficiaries stated that the housing project's design was inefficient and the organizations involved – whoever they were – spent the funding inappropriately. One male beneficiary stated that the amount the implementing organizations spent providing transportation for the engineers to come to and from the site could have been more appropriately used to build a deep well to provide the community with water. The project, which lacks running water and basic infrastructure needs, was a failure in the eyes of most beneficiaries.

*"The project has been implemented but the people can't benefit from this, because they couldn't build the houses well. Now we are tired of this project and we will leave the houses."*

– Female beneficiary

Female beneficiaries further emphasized the importance of the project in theory, stating that it provided them with a safe place to live despite the poor living conditions. Male beneficiaries, while also appreciative, indicated a desire and willingness to move out of the housing project, stating that the area had no employment opportunities and that their living standards were poorer than elsewhere in Kabul Province. They emphasized a lack of sustainable employment opportunities and said that nothing was keeping them in Qarabagh except the inability to find a home elsewhere.

*"They needed to begin by establishing a water supply system and then design the house. The project is a failure because of the lack of water."*

– Male beneficiary

## **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries did not believe the housing project was sustainable. Many believed that most families would move out as soon as they had the means to find a home elsewhere. They

suspected the housing project would be empty in the course of a few years. The housing project, as it stands, is not filled to capacity and there are several empty homes that were never filled or were abandoned by the residents. The project's infrastructure, according to the field team, was poor and needed significant repair, an issue that the community was unwilling to address.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

The respondents had never heard of the NABDP program or a DDA itself, which is perfectly normal since this project was an "added" project planned without any DDA involvement. The respondents all believed that the area did not have a DDA (though our field team indicated otherwise), so the field team adjusted its questions to the local CDC and the possibility of a DDA. While beneficiaries were optimistic about the possibility of forming a DDA in the district, they were unsure if it was necessary. Female beneficiaries repeatedly noted that they had already benefited greatly from the CDC's work, which they said produced tailoring and poultry projects for women. Men and women felt that they were represented on the CDC, with the latter group nonetheless hoping for stronger female roles on the CDC in the future.

## Provincial Profile: Kandahar

**Site 1:** Construction of Concrete Road

**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure

**Location:** Arghandab (At the time of our field team's visit, the MRRD advised our field team to visit sites *outside* of Kandahar City due to safety concerns.)

**Village(s):** Baba Sahib

**Date Visited:** September 2, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** October 9, 2008

**End Date:** September 27, 2009

**Budget:** 428, 829 USD

**Donor:** CRDA-Japan

**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 51,219

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

### Project Overview

Male and female beneficiaries were comparatively more aware of the DDA and the implemented project in Baba Sahib than in other villages. The beneficiaries held a high opinion of the DDA, believing that it was a sustainable entity working towards addressing the community's needs. The DDA served a larger purpose than infrastructure development, as respondents typically preferred it as their first source of conflict resolution outside of the home. There were no reported incidents or accusations of political favoritism, corruption or elite capture.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries were more knowledgeable about the project's prioritization and selection comparative to those interviewed in other provinces. All expressed an understanding that the MRRD was the government entity responsible for the project, and many were able to provide specific information about the DDA's incorporation of community members in the process. Male beneficiaries explained that, though community members were not directly involved in the project's selection, community representatives – from 72 villages – were consulted by the DDA. For instance, the local malek from Baba Saheb, who was interviewed by the field team, was consulted by the DDA. He acted as an intermediary between his village's families and the DDA, allowing for a more streamlined process than consulting every household directly.

The beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with this process, noting that it appeared to be a fair and transparent prioritization and selection process that did not sidestep the community.

#### **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

All beneficiaries noted that the road succeeded in achieving its objective, explaining that their access to other villages, the district center, and the provincial capital had improved. They expressed the multifaceted nature of the project's outcome, which improved the community's ability to transport agricultural goods to and from the village, thereby increasing employment and business opportunities, as well as making hospitals more accessible to the community.

While the road was not a DIAG-funded project, its construction reportedly indirectly improved security, according to several male and female respondents. One female respondent believed the project allowed community members to bypass roads with mines and reach the city more safely:

*"Before this project, the security was very bad and there were a lot of mines, the mines harm the people and people couldn't take their fruits and properties to the city, but now it is very good."*

– Female beneficiary

The NABDP project thus provided a safe alternative to mine-laden paths, increasing community members' safety when traveling outside of their village.

### **(3) Sustainability**

While the male beneficiaries attested to the road's perceived structural soundness, they lamented that, should the road require repairs, they would be unable to provide the service and/or pay for repairs. The beneficiaries expressed their concern about the possibility of maintenance, noting that roads were often targeted and destroyed by insurgent groups. The road, however, has not suffered from any structural damage or targeted attacks since its completion in 2009.

*"The people are happy with this project and there haven't been found any problems. I think this project is sustainable. If the road is destroyed, the village people should support this project."*

– Female beneficiary

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Both male and female beneficiaries understood the government's involvement in the project's implementation and in the creation and development of their local DDA. While only male beneficiaries were aware of the UNDP's joint partnership with the MRRD in the creation and support of the NABDP, female beneficiaries nonetheless expressed an impressive, though slightly incorrect, understanding of the structure of the DDA. Male beneficiaries were completely unaware that the DDA contained female members and that the DDA had implemented several projects, including a tailoring and poultry training, specifically targeting women. While aware of the projects and able to speak about them in great detail, women believed that the female DDA members functioned as a separate female council, which seems to actually be the case (information double-checked in January 2013). They contended that the male and female DDA members sat on two different gender-based councils. Though this is not in line with the NABDP's typical structure, cultural sensitivities precluded the possibility that male and female DDA members sat and met.

Female beneficiaries were impressed with the DDA's relationship to officials in the government and explained that, while the CDC implemented small-scale projects that did not often require or encourage them to develop a strong relationship with the government,

the DDA's large projects and high capacity compelled the government to take their opinions into consideration.

*"The DDA can talk to the provincial authorities about our problems, whereas the CDC only supports [and works in] the village."*

– Female beneficiary

Similarly, the village malek emphasized the bridging factor of the DDA's work, which he contended created a strong and positive link between his community and the government. He explained that, so long as the government addressed and

solved people's problems, his village would hold a favorable view of the government.

Interviewees pointed out that the DDA, which they otherwise held in high esteem, held only a limited number of meetings each month due to the district's high insecurity. While the limited number of meetings caused delayed judgments on community issues, the DDA still remained the first and principal source of conflict resolution. The interviewees in Baba Sahib and its neighboring villages were the only beneficiaries who preferred conflict resolution at the DDA-level instead of within their own village traditional shura or CDC.

Respondents thus expressed both a high reliance on the DDA and a strong satisfaction with the DDA today and in the future. They believed that the DDA was a highly sustainable entity that supported the government in supporting the people. They believed that there had been no incidences of political favoritism or corruption, and that the DDA acted fairly and transparently in all its functions.

**Site 2:** Construction of a Bridge  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Arghandab  
**Village(s):** Sayidan Kalacha  
**Date Visited:** September 3, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** November 25, 2009  
**End Date:** May 27, 2010  
**Budget:** 100,671 USD  
**Donor:** CIDA  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 12,081

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

Male and female beneficiaries said they were all consulted during the project selection process, expressing appreciation to the DDA for reaching out to as many community members as possible. However, male beneficiaries claimed that the DDA had promised the construction of two – not one – bridges with an asphalt road leading up to them. NABDP documentation lists the project as complete, and it is unlikely that the NABDP would construct two bridges and a road under a single project, but male beneficiaries nonetheless reported that the DDA had promised that the project would be larger than what has been implemented thus far.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries were reportedly consulted during the project prioritization and selection process, with both groups expressing satisfaction with the UNDP and MRRD's efforts to reach out to the entire community. The DDA reportedly consulted female beneficiaries through their female members as well as through their male members' family networks. Male DDA members would ask their female relatives what they thought of the bridge and to ask other women whereas female DDA members would directly ask women within their social network about their opinions. The DDA members employed a creative and impressive outreach system to reach women in their community, a clear challenge in many of Afghanistan's districts.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male beneficiaries noted that the bridge was not yet completed, though NABDP documentation recorded the project as completed. Male beneficiaries explained that the project as it stood was structurally sound but that it was not implemented entirely according to their discussions with the DDA, which they claim promised the community two bridges and an asphalt road leading to the current bridge. No NABDP documentation reviewed by the field team recorded the aforementioned two bridges and road, bringing to question the source of the male beneficiaries' claim.

As noted, the single bridge constructed was completed and produced positive reviews from the community. Male and female beneficiaries explained that, prior to the bridge's construction, they crossed the body of water (Arghandab river) with a ferry, a method they explained was not always safe.

*"Our [community's] children were drowning in the water, and the women couldn't cross the water. Now, all of the people in the village can cross safely and arrive at work on time."*

– Female beneficiary

Respondents explained that the bridge's construction allowed them to cross the water safely, thereby improving their livelihoods significantly by making it easier to transport goods to and from their village, connect to markets and hospitals

outside of their village, and generally increase their level of access outside of their village.

*"In my opinion, the bridge project is very important. We use it for crossing the river. The project has had a positive impact on our poor people because we can now easily transport our agricultural products to the markets outside of our village."*

– Male beneficiary

### **(3) Sustainability**

The beneficiaries – male and female – all believed that the bridge was structurally sound and would thus be sustainable. They did not note any technical issues with the bridge, and repeatedly explained that the construction material was of a high quality.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Male and female beneficiaries were impressed with the DDA's work in the village, and hoped that it would be sustainable. Arghandab, a notoriously dangerous district in Kandahar, was often considered too dangerous for the government and international groups to visit in the past. While still generally unsafe, the NABDP can typically travel freely to and from the district. The people, as female beneficiaries said, understand that the NABDP aims to help them improve their lives and thus acts as a natural community protection for the officials.

*"I want to say that the DDA is sustainable, because the security has been improved because of them. They [the government] used to come to our village and to the district by plane, but now they come by car. All of this is because of the DDA."*

– Male beneficiary

**Site 3:** Construction of a Bridge  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Daman District  
**Village(s):** Tarnak  
**Date Visited:** September 5, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** November 20, 2006  
**End Date:** November 27, 2011  
**Budget:** 248,170 USD  
**Donor:** CIDA  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 29,780

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

While beneficiaries said they were satisfied with the work of the DDA, many expressed contradicting beliefs about the quality of their work, explaining that the constructed bridge had several structural problems. The male beneficiaries emphasized that, should the bridge need maintenance and repair – a possibility they felt was imminent – then the community would be unable to address the issue. Many female beneficiaries noted that cultural restrictions often prevented them from traveling from their homes and immediate surroundings; as such, many had never even seen the bridge and had only heard about it secondhand.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Respondents were satisfied with the project's prioritization and selection. Though they had issues with the project's implementation (as will be discussed in the next section), they felt that the project addressed a major need that directly benefited their community and indirectly benefited the entire district.

Beneficiaries were not consulted during the project prioritization process but, because many had participated in either the DDA or CDC elections, felt that their community representatives on the CDCs and DDAs worked in the community's interest.

Notably, female beneficiaries also stated that they participated in the DDA's elections, a report unique to the female beneficiaries of this village. This claim, however, is unverifiable. The DDA in the district was elected by the CCDC and, as none of the women reported being a CDC member, it is unclear how they could have participated in the election of the DDA. Female beneficiaries were unable to name more than two DDA member names, implying that they perhaps had not directly voted in DDA elections. Nonetheless, the female beneficiaries understood the DDA's structure and were able to differentiate well between a DDA and CDC. One female beneficiary lamented the lack of female involvement in the DDA, noting that female DDA members have failed to fulfill their obligation to reach out to

women. Male beneficiaries' opinions differed as they asserted that the DDA's project selection process always incorporated women, youth and minorities.

## **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Beneficiaries emphasized the project's successes, from employing local men to building a solid structure that connects their villages to the rest of the district. All participants, including women who reportedly never used the bridge, expressed satisfaction with its construction. Focus group participants emphasized that the bridge created a safe route to access other villages. Prior to the bridges constructions, the community could not cross the river safely.

The bridge's construction provided the community with greater access to neighboring districts' markets (allowing them to both buy and sell products more easily), hospitals, and educational and business facilities located in Kandahar City. Male beneficiaries noted that their crops often spoiled on the way to larger markets prior to the construction of the bridge. The bridge allows them to transport their products with more ease and expand their businesses. They further noted that men's employment opportunities greatly increased thanks to the bridge connecting them more easily to larger markets.

*"Before the construction of the bridge, women used to die giving birth, because we could not cross the river [to get them to a hospital] during the rain."*

– Female beneficiary

## **(3) Sustainability**

Male beneficiaries, though satisfied with the bridge's current state, asserted that the bridge was riddled with structural issues that would eventually render it useless to the district. This view was substantiated by the field team, which noticed several apparent structural issues. The bridge was constructed with a mix of stones and poor quality cement, leading male beneficiaries and the field team to believe that the bridge was vulnerable to flooding.

*"This project will be destroyed in two or three years if there is too much water because it hasn't been implemented well. The people can't take care of this project without outside help because most people here are poor."*

– Male beneficiary

One male beneficiary noted that, both during and after the bridge's construction, a group of men reported the structural vulnerabilities to the DDA but the DDA "did nothing." The bridge's construction appeared precarious at best, an issue that is only more severe because of the project's relatively high budget (nearly 250,000 USD) and construction timeline (five years).

Female beneficiaries disagreed, believing the bridge did not have any structural issues and, if any did exist, the district would be able to repair it without outside assistance.

## **Impressions of the DDA**

Focus group participants cited mixed information about the DDA. While most male beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries appeared knowledgeable about the DDA system and its relationship to the NABDP as well as to the UNDP and MRRD, female beneficiaries were unaware of the DDA's relationship to the MRRD and UNDP, believing that DDAs were stand-

alone government entities. Furthermore, Female beneficiaries were surprised to learn that women were elected to their DDA. Unsurprisingly, no female beneficiary interviewed participated in DDA elections and, notably, none expressed a desire to do so. Female beneficiaries instead expressed a satisfaction that their male relatives were consulted prior to project selection by the DDA.

Male beneficiaries echoed that satisfaction and contended that the DDA proved itself to be a fair and representative body that took into account the beliefs and opinions of its constituency. They further substantiated the village malek's assertion that, though DDAs were working for the people, the government was not working for the DDA. The malek criticized the government for not supporting the DDA, claiming that the DDA struggled to implement projects because they often had to fulfill their government-determined obligations. For instance, the DDA is commissioned to monitor CDC projects (which is specific to the Kandahar province) but, as respondents claimed, receive no monetary assistance for their efforts, forcing them to pay out of pocket for carfare to other villages in the district.



*Picture 11: DIAG-funded bridge in Badakhshan*

**Site 4:** Construction of a Water Reservoir  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Daman District  
**Village(s):** Morghankecha  
**Date Visited:** September 4, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** May 25, 2010  
**End Date:** January 31, 2011  
**Budget:** 31,671 USD  
**Donor:** CRDA-Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,801

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries held a positive view of the project, believing it to be both well built and sustainable. Female beneficiaries criticized the DDA's perceived neglect of women's needs, and noted that, due to women's lack of access outside of their homes, women hardly benefited from the project. The focus group of the male beneficiaries yielded very positive impressions of the project and the DDA but was compromised by the presence of a DDA member in the room during the focus group. Due to cultural practices and potential safety risks, the field team was unable to remove the DDA member from the room.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Beneficiaries were well aware of the project prioritization and selection process. Female beneficiaries explained that male and female community members requested the construction of a water reservoir from the DDA and the DDA, in conjunction with the UNDP and MRRD, implemented the project. Notably, non-beneficiaries were also consulted during the project prioritization process and expressed satisfaction over the project's selection, emphasizing the village's need for clean drinking water.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Males and females both noted improved access to clean drinking water. Respondents noted previously having to walk long distances to collect clean drinking water, which is now readily available in their village. This may further offer protection for women and children who are often required to collect water. The field team reported that the structure was well built and appeared sturdy, with no visible structural defects.

**(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries each pay 30 Afghanis (approximately 60 cents) per water pump. This inexpensive community contribution feeds into a maintenance fund for future repairs, rendering the project highly sustainable without dependence on outside aid. Some beneficiaries noted that the benefits of the project were so high that, should the fund be

unable to cover the costs for maintenance and repair, they would personally contribute more than the required 30 Afghanis.

*“This project is sustainable and, should we need to pay more to repair it our community will pay more. If there is any problem with this project, the villagers will solve it.”*

– Female beneficiary

A small portion of female beneficiaries disagreed, believing that the community would be unable to conduct repairs without external support.



*Picture 12: Construction of a wall in Nangarhar*

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Impressions of the DDA varied greatly between male and female beneficiaries, and discussions among female beneficiaries quickly became hostile. Female beneficiaries, none of whom participated in DDA elections, argued that the DDA prioritized infrastructure projects that would alleviate the community’s high unemployment rate among men. By only selecting projects that employed local men, female respondents felt that women were ignored and marginalized within the community by the DDA. Most DDA projects were outdoor infrastructure projects, like the water reservoir or bridge, which women argued were “male-oriented.” Female beneficiaries argue that because women were often not allowed to leave their homes, they did not have the opportunity to benefit from outdoor projects. Female beneficiaries thus held a strongly negative view of the DDA, believing that the DDA prioritized projects that addressed men’s unemployment at the expense of benefiting women.

Non-beneficiaries, on the other hand, held a positive view of the DDA, noting that the DDA’s Secretary was a member of their village. One non-beneficiary noted, “[W]e have a positive view of the DDA because they solve our

*“The DDA is a bridge between the government and people. If the DDA is destroyed, the relationship [between the government and the people] will be destroyed. Remote villages won’t have a relationship with the government and won’t feel responsible to the government.”*

– Non-beneficiary

*problems at both the village and district levels. They have implemented many projects in our village and many of our problems have been solved.*" The non-beneficiaries expressed positive views about the water reservoir project and mentioned that the DDA performed its duty fairly and transparently, attempting to assist all villages within the district without preference to particular groups. Indeed, the non-beneficiaries interviewed were involved in the water reservoir's prioritization and selection.

One non-beneficiary noted the collaborative nature of the DDA that joined rural communities with the government.

Notably, the village malek mentioned that the 300-family community had close ties to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, noting that the village consisted of the President's distant relatives. Furthermore, the village malek, who was in the room during the male beneficiary focus group, was a member of the DDA, possibly biasing the outcome of the focus group. The malek and male beneficiaries' remarkably positive view of the DDA should thus be taken in light of the community's close relationship with the central government.

## Provincial Profile: Kunduz

**Site 1:** Gravelling of Tertiary Road

**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure

**Location:** Kunduz City

**Village(s):** Hazrath Sultan, Hichkly Uzbekia, Kanami Khord

**Date Visited:** August 14, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** February 9, 2009

**End Date:** November 6, 2009

**Budget:** 126,702 USD (across three villages)

**Donor:** CNTF

**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 15,204 (across three villages)

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

### Project Overview

The beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, though generally positive about the DDA's potential impact on their community, were unaware about basic facts regarding the DDA. The field teams did not observe any structural damage to the site.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries had little to no information regarding the project prioritization and selection process. Male beneficiaries understood that the MRRD was involved in the project, but could not explain its involvement or the DDA's process in choosing to implement the road's construction. Some male beneficiaries further stated that they had personally been involved in the DDA's project selection process, being consulted by the DDA's membership about the possibility of building a road in the village.

#### **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

The road – five kilometers in length, six meters wide and 20 centimeters thick – had significantly improved the community's livelihoods. Female beneficiaries explained that pregnant women used to travel to the city via a handcart in order to give birth. Women in the village often did not make it to the hospital, suffering from miscarriages on the way. Children were unable to go to school, having to walk long distances in the dust and arriving late. Farmers were further unable to take their products to the local markets. Crops would often ruin on the way to the market, decreasing the family's potential income. The road's construction has had incredibly positive results on the community, with farmers most significantly easily transporting their goods to improve the area's socioeconomic status.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Neither the field teams nor the beneficiaries believed the area suffered from any structural issues, with beneficiaries proudly displaying the road. Field teams did not observe any damage to the road thus far and noted that, while it looked sustainable and in good shape, it would require regular maintenance that the community did not seem able to pay. The community, for instance, hoped to raise funds to provide asphalt to the road, but were unable to do so.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Female beneficiaries held a positive impression of the DDA. While they had little knowledge of the DDA and had not participated in its elections, they remained optimistic about the DDA's future and believed that the DDA was working in the best interest of the people. One female beneficiary, for instance, stated that *"the DDAs are representative of the people and they always aim to solve the people's problems."* While they lamented women's limited involvement in the DDA's activities, they were again optimistic about women's roles, stating that they believed women would become more active as members in the future. Male beneficiaries concurred, noting the difficulties that women encountered in regard to the DDAs were primarily based in the area's culture. They held similarly positive views of the DDA's potential, and focused on what it could do in the future given that its intention to help people fairly was clear.

**Site 2:** Construction of a Bridge  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Kunduz City  
**Village(s):** Chilan Mazar  
**Date Visited:** August 15, 2012

**Budget:** 178,312 USD

**Accessibility Note**

Given that only four projects – three of which were visited (see Site 1) – have thus far been completed in Kunduz City, the field team visited a project that was nearing completion at the suggestion of the local NABDP office. The only remaining project of the four was a fertilizer distribution that occurred from 2002 to 2004 with unclear beneficiaries according to NABDP records.

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	Structural issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

The field team and beneficiaries noted that structural issues existed and were unaddressed by the DDA. Non-beneficiaries felt that the DDA was solely representative of a select number of villages, often not involving villages of non-dominant ethnic groups, an opinion contested by male beneficiaries.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female beneficiaries were unaware of the project's prioritization and selection, with some beneficiaries not knowing there was even a bridge connecting their village to other communities. Respondents explained that, since their husbands had not spoken of a bridge, they had no way of knowing it existed because they don't often leave their homes.

Male beneficiaries, on the other hand, were fairly knowledgeable about the project's selection. They demonstrated an understanding of the MRRD's role in supporting the DDA to implement infrastructure projects, and explained that the DDA gathered the people in the village two or three times to gather their opinions about different projects that could be selected for implementation in the area. The village was strongly in favor of the bridge, which they felt was the community's direst need. The DDA followed suit and soon began a survey of the land for the construction of the bridge.

Non-beneficiaries believed that the project's prioritization was unfair. While the bridge may have been the most pressing need in the village of Chilan Mazar, non-beneficiaries highlighted several other villages (including their own) that needed infrastructure projects. They noted that other projects in the district should have been prioritized over the bridge's construction.

Interestingly, the village male of the beneficiary group – both a CDC and DDA member – believed that the project had been implemented by UNDP and MRRD support but that the

funding was provided by the CDC.

## **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Regardless of their limited information about the project's implementation, female beneficiaries repeatedly noted that if there were a bridge in their village, it would benefit them greatly, solving the *"biggest problem of the people in the area"* by creating an easy route to *"the clinic, other lands, and the bazaar."* The two women who knew of the project's selection mistakenly believed that the bridge's construction had not yet been completed.

Male beneficiaries explained that women and youth do use the bridge, noting that women use it in order to visit their relatives outside of the village and youth use it in order to go to school or visit a clinic in the city. The male beneficiaries emphasized that individuals of all ethnicities and ages used the bridge, but this went unverified by the field team's discussion with female beneficiaries.

## **(3) Sustainability**

Field teams observed several structural issues with the bridge, issues that male beneficiaries also noted in their focus group discussion. The protection wall on the side of the bridge is poorly constructed so that water surrounds it; should the water pressure become too high, the protection wall would likely collapse. The male beneficiaries noted that they told the DDA of the problem, but the DDA responded that it was unable to help due a budget shortage. Community members have been unable to address the problem themselves, explaining only that they hope the bridge survives.



*Picture 13: Protection wall (on the side of the bridge) in Paktia*

## **Impressions of the DDA**

Female respondents lacked information about the DDA, thereby precluding them from providing the field team with their impressions of the DDA. They were unaware that the DDA was an elected body that represented their village and implemented development projects addressing difficulties in rural livelihoods.

Male beneficiaries presented clear relationships with DDA members, whereas non-beneficiaries lacked basic understanding of the DDA's structure. One non-beneficiary believed that the DDA was composed of 21 women and 21 men, and another argued that

the DDA had 33 members. The non-beneficiaries clearly stated that they felt they were less represented by the DDA than other villages due to their comparatively long distance from the district center.

*“The DDA [members] are representative of those villages that are near in the district [capital] more than it is of villages that are far away... We haven’t even been consulted in the election process of the DDA. If someone informed us, we would have run for a position ourselves.”*

- Non-beneficiary

On this note, and more generally, this project raises the question of what international and national entities consider as “remote” at the district level. The notion of remoteness has not only to do with distance and kilometers, it is first and foremost a question of visibility: many communities that complain about the lack of involvement of the local DDA are often located in the next valley, but they do not benefit from the same visibility as the cities or communities located on the main valley or by the main trade road; as such, their capacity to raise the attention of the DDA on their problem is actually weakened by the lack of political and economic weight of their representative.

Another non-beneficiary stated that the DDA represented a limited number of tribes, and that their village’s ethnicities (Hazara and Tajik) were not represented in the Pashtun-dominated DDA. (The ethnicities of DDA members were unconfirmed by the field team due to cultural sensitivities. A Pashtun-dominated DDA, though possible, is unlikely in Tajik-dominated Herat City.) Male beneficiaries disagreed, asserting that the DDA was fully and fairly representative of the district. Male beneficiaries respected the DDA as a fourth source of conflict resolution, approaching the DDA for assistance if their family members, village elder and CDC were unable to solve the issue at hand.

**Site 3:** Construction of Water Reservoir  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Khan Abad  
**Village(s):** Dahana Deh Weran  
**Date Visited:** August 12, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** December 16, 2008  
**End Date:** February 22, 2010  
**Budget:** 38,821 USD  
**Donor:** UNDP  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,659

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	Structural issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Both male and female beneficiaries explained that having this project was very relevant to community, and that they appreciated the selection of this project. However, respondents contended the water tanks have never functioned properly and the community has never been able to use it because several DDA members had embezzled the funds allocated for the project.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female beneficiaries explained that, prior to this project, community members in the village did not have access to water and therefore had to carry water from far off water tanks in Khan Abad. The community finally turned to the DDA for help. The DDA responded by sending a small group of representative members to assess the community's needs and situation. While the female beneficiaries did not mention the UNDP or the MRRD, male beneficiaries explained that several local community members and representatives of the MRRD were involved in the project selection and implementation. However, male beneficiaries lacked information regarding the UNDP's involvement in the NABDP program. The local male, for instance, stated that he never heard of the UNDP before.

Nonetheless, all those interviewed emphasized the need for a water tank reservoir. Because the current reservoir is not functioning, the male and female beneficiaries believed that the project was not meeting the community's direst need.

*"The people have not used the project because the money that belonged to the project was embezzled by the organization [the DDA] and the village representatives [in the DDA]."*  
 – Female beneficiary

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Several female beneficiaries believed that DDA members had embezzled the project's funds. The field team concurred that the water tank was not functioning properly just two years after its completion; after speaking with the head of the DDA about the project's costs and

funding, the field team further left with a similar suspicion.

Male beneficiaries did not share the same suspicions, but highlighted several structural issues with the water reservoir, noting that *“this project is not suitable according to its technical proposal.”*

*“The tankers should have been built in places where there were water sources, but it wasn’t. There is no better project than this to serve the people of this village as water is a huge issue but, unfortunately, this project can’t help women, youth or the tribes living here. The main reason is that the project was not built as expected and it’s a failure.”*

– Male beneficiary

The village malek further contended that no one had yet used the water reservoir, and the reservoir itself required a protection wall. Field teams observed that only a small fence with cement and stones protected the water reservoir. He complained that the DDA’s embezzlement would not have occurred if there had been proper oversight provided by the NABDP for the project. Furthermore, unlike in other villages, he believed that, if a private contractor had implemented the project instead of the one selected by the DDA, the room for corruption would have decreased.



*Picture 14: Malek showing the problems of a water reservoir in Herat*

### **(3) Sustainability**

Male and female beneficiaries did not feel the project was sustainable, highlighting that they had never utilized the project themselves and that it was already in a poor state. Field teams

concluded, noting several structural issues with the water reservoir.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries, particularly female, had little knowledge of the DDA itself. None of the female beneficiaries interviewed participated in the election or had knowledge about the DDA's election. Male beneficiaries were slightly more aware of the DDA, noting that the DDA represented several different villages that selected its members. These male beneficiaries also stated that they had participated in the elections of the DDA, believing it to be fair and transparent. The same was true for non-beneficiaries interviewed who had similarly limited knowledge about the DDA.

Male and female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries preferred to seek assistance from their village elder and formal government authorities, never seeking assistance from the CDC or DDA as governance bodies themselves.

*"The representatives [of the DDA] are only from members of old political parties."*

– Village malek

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were unsatisfied with the DDA's representation of their communities, with female beneficiaries noting that they implemented too few projects and male beneficiaries believing that it was working in the interest of only some people and village. Several beneficiaries contended that the DDA was a different form of the same old political parties.

*"I think that the DDA doesn't represent my village as well as they represent other villages. There is discrimination in the selection and prioritization of projects because projects are conducted quickly and without delay in powerful villages and other villages aren't given any projects."*

– Male beneficiary

Male and female beneficiaries further had little knowledge of women's involvement in the DDA, with the latter group unaware that there were even female representatives on the DDA.

**Site 4:** Construction of road  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Khan Abad  
**Village(s):** Musa Zal  
**Date Visited:** August 13, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** February 9, 2009  
**End Date:** August 12, 2010  
**Budget:** 34,520 USD  
**Donor:** CNTF  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,142

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	Structural Issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

While the community was satisfied with the road's prioritization and selection, beneficiaries felt that the road was unsustainable, highlighting several structural issues already existing. The road – eight kilometers long and three meters wide – was already damaged from high traffic and rain.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the project prioritization and selection process, noting that their local CDC and village malek represented them before the DDA to request the road's construction and repair. The DDA followed the request with a brief visit to assess the site, and soon implemented the project. While female beneficiaries (unlike their male counterparts) were completely unaware of the DDA's selection process and of its support from the MRRD and UNDP, they remained content with the process and felt it fairly represented their beliefs. Male beneficiaries were similarly content with the process, noting that some of them had further been consulted about the road's construction prior to the DDA's implementation of the project.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male and female beneficiaries were highly impressed with project's outcome. Male beneficiaries appreciated the temporary employment they received during the road's construction, and female beneficiaries noted significant improvements to their livelihoods. Female beneficiaries explained that, prior to the graveling, the community hardly traveled to the district center due to poor road conditions. Farmers were unable to transport their goods. Individuals were limited to work within the village. Dust created a difficult walking environment for children. The road's graveling addressed all of these issues, making the district center (and thus the rest of the province) more accessible to the rural community. Female beneficiaries further stated that the community's agricultural businesses had improved, allowing families to sell their crops in a timely manner, and more children were able to go to school outside of the district.

Interestingly, there was no indication that the project countered narcotics trafficking in the village. Villagers stated that there had always been a limited amount of poppy production in the area, but that it had never occurred in their immediate village. They personally did not understand the link between the road's construction and narcotics.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries did not think the road was sustainable. Male beneficiaries highlighted that the road had never been asphalted, and female beneficiaries explained that heavy truck traffic and seasonal rain and snow had already begun damaging the road. Beneficiaries generally did not believe the road would last more than three years, lamenting their inability to fix the roads themselves. They repeatedly emphasized their need for additional external financial support to fix the road.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries held positive opinions about the DDA. Female beneficiaries were unusually aware of the DDA's structure and activities. One female beneficiary reportedly voted in both DDA elections, and was able to provide specific information about the DDA's structure. While the female beneficiaries preferred to resolve projects with their community leader's assistance, they understood the DDA to be another potential source for conflict resolution.

*"Those members who have connections with authorities in Kunduz, they grab many projects for their villages."*

– Female beneficiary

Male and female beneficiaries believed that the DDA was adequately representative, and were impressed with the DDA's links to government authorities, believing that such connections increased the number of projects implemented in their district

Female beneficiaries, despite their general awareness, did not know that the DDA contained female members, noting that they had hoped the DDA would incorporate women as well. Once told of the DDA's one-third female membership, the female beneficiaries were upset that the female members had failed to implement any female-specific projects.

Only one woman appeared to know of women's role on the DDA, but noted that she believed *"women are playing a symbolic role in the DDA...There aren't enough seats for women in the DDA in order to defend themselves...Most of the time the DDA meets without women's representation except in name."*

Male beneficiaries disagreed, believing that women were active members in the DDA with full and fair representation. They held purely positive views of the DDA with some hoping to join the DDA itself one day.

## Provincial Profile: Nangarhar

**Site 1:** Construction of a BioGas Plant

**Sector:** Rural Energy Development

**Location:** Shewa District (MRRD documentation lists the site as located in Jalalabad City, but local villagers identified the area as Shewa District)

**Village(s):** Salam Poor

**Date Visited:** August 9, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** December 15, 2011

**End Date:** October 18, 2011

**Budget:** 11,425 USD

**Donor:** Norway

**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 77

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

### Project Overview

At the time of the interview, only sixteen households were using the biogas system and most households were still waiting for the project to be fully implemented though records indicated that the project had already been completed. Based on additional focus group discussions held in January 2013, it seems that beneficiaries were slightly disappointed at the project, as they were expecting an extension of the system to their household – which favors the idea that there was a clear misunderstanding in the way the project was presented and explained to the local population.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Respondents indicated mixed project involvement, noting striking differences between male and female beneficiaries involvements in the community-implemented BioGas Plant project. While all those interviewed expressed being informed of the planned implementation of the project, only men reported being part of the project selection and prioritization process. Women were excluded from this, and only told that the project would occur after it had been selected.

#### **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Most people in the community recognized the benefits of the biogas system and are currently waiting for the project to be fully implemented. However, the MRRD notes that the project is already fully implemented. Respondents noted two primary benefits:

1. Decreased labor required for preparing food – One beneficiary noted, “The people are really happy about this project, because it’s for their own benefit. It makes

women's work much easier. In our opinion, this is a good and transparent project because it's for our benefit.

2. Healthier cooking conditions – One beneficiary reiterated the thoughts of other focus group participants, explaining that, *“before this system, women were exposed to smoke while cooking, and now by using this bio gas system they rarely become sick and will have a healthy life.”*
3. While both the female and male beneficiaries mentioned no major structural problems, one male beneficiary, however, highlighted the increase of insects in their neighborhood after the construction of the biogas system, which uses cow dung that is commonly known to attract insects. A male beneficiary noted that he *“...can't even sleep during the night because of insects.”*

### **(3) Sustainability**

Beneficiaries noted that the biogas project will be sustainable as long as the households are able to continue animal husbandry. One male respondent explained, *“if we are able to save the stock, the project will be [continue] to work, but if we don't save anything, the project will not work.”* While the female beneficiaries felt that most of the community members are very poor and therefore will not be able to repair the biogas system themselves, the male beneficiaries rather felt confident and believed that the project is sustainable as they were the ones who controlled the project. The sustainability of the project is thus entirely dependent on the people themselves, and the field team identified no clear threats.

When asked whether this project has been relevant to them and to their community, another female beneficiary indicated that most households in their communities are very satisfied with the project and find it pleasant to use biogas as cooking fuel as it produces no smoke and less dirt in the kitchen.

*“This is a real advantageous project for us because there is less dirt in our village... at the moment we are using the animal dung and fire- wood because don't have anything else. But by using biogas we could save money to buy firewood.”*

– Female beneficiary

The male beneficiaries also emphasized the positive economic effect of replacing firewood with biogas. Other positive effects of the biogas system mentioned by the male beneficiaries was through using the biogas system, they are also able to have indoors lighting. However, only one male beneficiary felt that the biogas project was less relevant. According to him priority should have been given to the construction of a school, nothing that *“our children have many problems. The children learn in the sun and they had many problems... The school project was more important than the gas project.”*

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Male beneficiaries appeared to be less positive about the DDA as compared to the DDA. According to one male beneficiary, *“The CDC is completely fair and transparent, but the DDA is not fair and transparent, because the DDA implements more projects in villages that don't need that projects. The DDA isn't fair and beneficial to us, because there are issues with tribal and political favoritism in the DDA.”* Another male beneficiary added to this view by stating that, *“there are tribal and political favoritism in the project selection and prioritization [of the DDA]. The projects benefit the people who have authority and power.”*

This unequal balance of projects was also further highlighted by our non-beneficiary focus group discussion in the village of Padsha Qala. Here, several non-beneficiaries indicated that there have been incidences of political and tribal favoritism in the project selection and periodization where some villages have received much more projects than they actually needed to.

The male non-beneficiaries complained about the lack of projects in their community implemented by the DDA. According to them the CDC does refer projects to the DDA, but this process is however not fair and transparent. According to the male non-beneficiaries, the DDA is sustainable if they are able to implement projects in all villages and not just in a few villages. One male respondent highlighted that the DDA is dependent on people's vote, as the community members will only continue to vote for them if they work hard and implement projects in all villages and not just in a few villages.

The non-beneficiaries indicated the MRRD implemented several road construction projects as well as one protection wall project in their village, in 2011. In addition, the NSP has constructed 12 water pumps as well. The male non-beneficiaries reported that these projects have been very beneficial to the community and they are in need of more projects like this, however their village is still in need of a clinic, a school, and a deep well and protection walls near the Konar River and the Khewa stream.

The negative view of the DDA, however, deviates highly from the view expressed by the malek interview in the village Padsha Qala. The malek in Padsha Qala, while a member of the CDC, held negative opinions of the CDC and relatively positive opinions of the DDA. The main difference between the CDC and the DDA highlighted by the malek, is that the CDC requests projects from the DDA whereas the DDA acts as the authoritative body who signs the contracts and has access to the banks. In January 2013, the review team further investigated the reasons of such an immovable opinion and found out that the malek had personal issues with some members of the CDC (after a land dispute issue between some of the other CDC members and his family that had negatively affected his income and reputation); by contrast, it seems that a member of the local DDA, had made some serious (and unsuccessful) efforts to overrule the initial decision made by the local informal court, which may explain the malek's positive bias towards the DDA.

*“The CDC is a weak and corrupt body which is not helping much people and the DDA does not have any real authority over the CDC.”*

– Village malek

The malek viewed the DDA to be working very hard and they implement the same projects with less money compared to the CDC. The malek believed that it would be much better if all projects were implemented by the DDA. The malek further stated, *“The DDA does meet the need of the community, however the demands of the people in the community are quiet high, and the DDA is financially restricted to fulfill such demands.”*

**Site 2:** Cleaning of a Karez  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Shewa District (MRRD documentation lists the site as located in Jalalabad City, but local villagers identified the area as Shewa District)  
**Village(s):** Anar Bagh  
**Date Visited:** August 8, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** November 1, 2008  
**End Date:** February 1, 2009  
**Budget:** 26, 433 USD  
**Donor:** Japan CRD and Norway  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,172

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

Male and female beneficiaries reported different impressions of the project and local DDA with the former answering almost unanimously positively. Male beneficiaries felt that the project selection process was fair, the project was very helpful to the community and that DDA members functioned in a transparent way. Female beneficiaries, however, believed the community was not consulted during the project selection process and that the DDA worked disjointedly due to internal tensions. Female beneficiaries further noted that the community was not benefiting from the project, contending that only a few families were benefiting due to a case of elite capture.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries expressed strikingly different opinions regarding the project prioritization, selection and implementation process. Female beneficiaries contended that community members were not consulted by the DDA, believing that DDA members – whom they interestingly referred to as village elders – were unwilling to work with one another. The perceived personal tensions within the DDA, female respondents noted, resulted in a lack of coordination within the DDA structure and led to sporadic projects being implemented that neglected to involve some DDA and community. Female beneficiaries were primarily unaware of the project's details. One female beneficiary believed the project was implemented ten years ago by a Japanese non-profit organization. Another female respondent further believed that a Japanese worker involved in the project's implementation was killed soon after completion. No female beneficiary was aware of the MRRD or UNDP's role, and all had little to no knowledge about the local DDA.

*“The community had a strong role in the project selection process, the workers and engineers were selected from this village and they worked hard than other people. The project was implemented well and all the people are satisfied.”*  
 – Male beneficiary

Male beneficiaries, on the other hand, believed the project included intensive cooperation between the CDC and DDA as well as between the DDA and the rest of the community. They described the process as highly collaborative, with the DDA inquiring about household's main needs and working with local community members to prioritize projects.

## **(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Men were similarly very satisfied with the project's implementation and outcome. Men explained that their largest issue prior to the project's implementation was the lack of water due to build up blocking the karez's flow; the cleaning, they noted, allowed for water to flow and households to use the karez for water. Female beneficiaries, on the other hand, believed the karez was not cleaned properly, and the water remains too little for their household needs.

Female beneficiaries contended that the project had little affect on the community, whereas male beneficiaries believed that the cleaning drastically changed the lives of the community. Female beneficiaries, unlike male beneficiaries, emphasized the perception that only a few powerful elders were benefiting from the cleaning in a case of elite capture. While men said that all community members were benefiting from the cleaning fairly, women asserted that DDA members were hoarding water usage, leaving little for other community members to irrigate their land with.

## **(3) Sustainability**

In line with their consistent criticism, female beneficiaries did not believe the project was sustainable. They criticized the lack of sufficient water the cleaning produced, and further explained that the community would not be able to re-clean the karez when needed without external support. Male beneficiaries disagreed, believing the community could raise the necessary funds to re-clean the karez when needed.

## **Impressions of the DDA**

As briefly mentioned, female beneficiaries were generally unaware of the DDA. One woman displayed some knowledge about the general role of the DDA, noting that she had benefited from a DDA tailoring course. All other female focus group participants, however, had no knowledge about the DDA's functions, elections and its members. One woman believed she was not allowed to participate in DDA elections, and many noted that they had never heard of a DDA before. Misinformation about DDAs was common, with another beneficiary believing the cleaning was funded by the DIAG program and successfully helped three former insurgents to realign with the government.

Notably, however, all female beneficiaries responded positively when asked if the DDA treated women equally. Despite not having basic knowledge about a DDA, it is important to highlight female beneficiaries' strong belief that the DDA was acting in the interest of male *and* female community members. Male beneficiaries also responded positively though they appeared more familiar with the project details and the local DDA.

Given their lack of familiarity with the DDA, it is not surprising the female beneficiaries did not use the DDA for issues of conflict resolutions. Beneficiaries noted a preference for community elders and then CDCs for assistance. Male beneficiaries noted a similar preference, but said the DDA was their third source of conflict resolution after their local CDC.

**Site 3:** Construction of a Gabion Wall  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Kama District  
**Village(s):** Mirza Kheil  
**Date Visited:** August 10, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** March 29, 2008  
**End Date:** August 29, 2008  
**Budget:** 30,470 USD  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,656

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female beneficiaries were not consulted during the project prioritization and selection process. Though their families' agricultural lands benefited from the project, most were unable to describe the project selection process.

*"We don't have information who has implemented this project, because men have information about this..."*

– Female beneficiary

One female beneficiary, though not consulted, was aware of the project selection process, explaining that the NABDP team entered the village and offered to build a retaining wall to prevent floods from

destroying nearby farmland. Male beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, however, were generally able to describe the project prioritization and selection process, implying that only men were involved in the process. Male respondents explained that a gabion wall was unanimously determined to be the community's most immediate and greatest need, and would benefit all community members – women included – alike. One male beneficiary noted that, because the gabion wall protects families' homes, women and youth invariably benefit from the project and would have retroactively agreed that it was the community's greatest need.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male and female beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the gabion wall, explaining that it had prevented the destruction of agricultural land. However, a female beneficiary highlighted the community's frequent flooding as a potential issue. She believed that the retaining wall, though suitable to prevent small and frequent floods, would prove insufficient for the larger floods the community faces from time to time.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Apart from some beneficiaries' fear that the gabion wall would not survive a large flood, most interviews believed the project was sustainable. Beneficiaries emphasized the high quality construction materials used to build the wall. More interestingly, respondents commented on the sustainability of the NABDP, believing that it was sustainable as long as the government was functioning well.

*"If the government is sustainable, the DDAs will be sustainable. If the government is destroyed, the DDAs will also be destroyed."*

– Female beneficiary

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Female and male beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries expressed a positive view of the DDA and project. Non-beneficiaries emphasized that the retaining wall was built for all homes that were near the river and thus the most vulnerable to flooding. The retaining wall, they said, helped these families, which, in turn, helped the community's economy. Non-beneficiaries believed that they had no need for a retaining wall and thus appreciated the government's assistance to their village for those who needed it.

*"The retaining wall was built for people who needed it, and all the people thus benefit from the wall. All the people who live in the village benefit from this project in some way."*

– Female beneficiary

All interviewed expressed a positive view of the DDA because of its role in constructing the gabion wall. Male and female beneficiaries were knowledgeable about the DDA and its election processes, with the latter notably highlighting women's participation in the election of the DDA. Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike noted that the DDA functioned fairly and transparently with no instances of favoritism. Women and youth were reportedly active members of the DDA and the community as a whole, helping propose and implement projects alongside their male counterparts.

Male beneficiaries further noted that women and youth's involvement in the project was crucial to creating a democratic and representative community. Without it, DDAs would not be representative and would thus not be as effective as it was judged to be with the entire community's input. One beneficiary believed that, without full representation of women and youth, DDAs would not be able to improve communities' relationship with the government. The gabion wall, he said, helped improve the entire community's perception of the government because *"people are satisfied with their work and know that when they want something, they can get it with the government's help."*

**Site 4:** Construction of a BioGas Plant  
**Sector:** Rural Energy Development  
**Location:** Kama District  
**Village(s):** Kakal Bajawri, Mirza Kheil 1-3  
**Date Visited:** August 11, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** Jun 3, 2010  
**End Date:** October 25, 2011  
**Budget:** Between 3,897 and 14,232 per plant  
**Donor:** Japan CRD and Norway  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 280

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Poor	

**Project Overview**

Female beneficiaries were again generally unaware of the NABDP program, unable to provide basic information about it. Male beneficiaries were, however, highly critical of the NABDP and NSP programs, often confusing the two and believing one or both were involved in corruption. The village malek, a CDC member, contended that the CDC was corrupt whereas the DDA was working for the people, and was the only interviewee able to differentiate adequately between a DDA and CDC as well as provide information about the DDA's relationship to the MRRD and UNDP. Non-beneficiaries, similar to female beneficiaries, had little understanding of the NABDP, were unaware of the project's implementation, and did not share any positive or negative opinions about the DDA or the project. Once the field team made the non-beneficiaries aware of the project, respondents only expressed a desire for a similar initiative for their community.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries reported high cooperation in the prioritization and selection of the project. Beneficiaries said the project was selected through a voting system though it was unclear to them who was responsible for holding elections. Community members believed that the CDC, DDA or provincial authorities were responsible for elections, and others believed that all three worked cooperatively to hold elections. Beneficiaries believed the elections were fair and transparent even though women said they had not heard of or taken part in elections.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male and female beneficiaries believed the project was very helpful to the community, explaining that the community had become less dependent on purchasing gas from the market as a result. Given the reportedly high unemployment rate in the village, beneficiaries noted that the self-sufficient system helped reduced households' costs.

### (3) Sustainability

All respondents believed that the project was sustainable, expressing their gratefulness for its low and easy maintenance as well as its assistance to the village's economic development. As noted, beneficiaries became less dependent on market purchases as a result of the BioGas system.

#### Impressions of the DDA

Two primary observations were made regarding beneficiaries' perceptions of the DDA. Firstly, despite their comparative awareness of the BioGas system, beneficiaries were unfamiliar with DDAs. They often neglected to refer to the assembly, as a "DDA," instead referring to them as "district-level authorities" or, more commonly, confusing DDAs with CDCs. Beneficiaries were generally unable to differentiate between the two beyond a basic differentiation between village and district-level governance. In fact, when asked about their opinions of DDAs, respondents instead provided their opinions of CDCs. The village malek (who was a CDC member) was the only interviewee who expressed a clear differentiation between a DDA and CDC, understanding the group's various roles and responsibilities as well as their election structures.

Secondly, beneficiaries noted a negative opinion of DDAs, believing them to be corrupt and working for themselves instead of the community. It is important to highlight again the confusion between DDAs and CDCs, leaving open the possibility that respondents were critical of CDCs – not DDAs – but were unable to differentiate between the two. A single respondent would vacillate between expressing positive and negative opinions about the DDA and CDC, unable to provide a clear opinion of his/her opinion about the DDA. Female respondents were generally completely unaware of DDAs.

*"We don't know about the comparison of district development council and local development council. I don't know about it."*

– Female beneficiary

The primary criticism was that DDAs and CDCs favored certain tribal and/or political groups and pocketed funds from projects' budgets. In the following quote, a male beneficiary accuses CDCs of corruption though he again appears to confuse DDAs with CDCs. Since DDAs are elected by CCDCs and CDCs are elected directly by the people, it is possible that the male

beneficiary confuses the two structures.

*"The CDC members weren't selected by the people. They don't consult with the people and they take 80 percent of the project's money for themselves. They CDC spends 20 percent for project implementation. The difference between the DDA and CDC is that the DDA has been selected by the people."*

– Male beneficiary

The village malek who, as noted, was a CDC member, however substantiated the male beneficiary's view. He noted that the CDC was not "working transparently" whereas the DDA was working "transparently and for the welfare of the people." Regardless of his generally positive view of the DDA, the malek continued to believe that the DDA was also involved in corruption, that projects "had been implemented in a discriminative manner because the people who had power benefited the most." The village malek, like the male and female beneficiaries, explained that minority groups, women and youth were not among those with power, and often benefited little from implemented projects.

Male beneficiaries further criticized the DDA's low capacity, believing that DDA members were "illiterate people." Generally, while knowledgeable about the projects themselves, male and female beneficiaries remained unaware – and highly critical – of the NABDP.



*Picture 15: Construction of the Karrukh protection wall in Herat*

## Provincial Profile: Paktia

**Site 1:** Construction of Water Reservoir  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Sayyid Karam  
**Village(s):** Koz Sejenk  
**Date Visited:** August 24, 2012

### Project Overview

**Start Date:** November 18, 2008  
**End Date:** May 30, 2009  
**Budget:** 66,400 USD  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 7,968

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 UNKNOWN	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

Due to high security concerns, our female interviewer was unable to travel to Koz Sejenk.

### Project Overview

The DDA and its water reservoir project were generally highly regarded in the village, but beneficiaries expressed concern about the project's sustainability as well as the DDA's lack of recent activity in the village. They noted that, while women sat on the DDA, they often were marginalized due to cultural restrictions, preventing them from being equal players in DDA decision-making.

#### **(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male beneficiaries stated that the village approached the DDA with a project proposal, which the DDA then formalized and took to the provincial and central offices of the NABDP program. The NABDP approved the project, providing the DDA with the financial and technical support to allow the CDC to implement the project. The beneficiaries were generally well aware of the project selection process, with male beneficiaries stating that they had voted formally in favor of the project. They repeatedly emphasized the importance of their direct involvement.

One male beneficiary noted, however, that a protection wall would have been of greater benefit to the whole community. The other male beneficiaries responded that they hoped to implement the protection wall next but, because the protection wall benefited only the families near the river, it had less reach than the water reservoir, which they claimed assisted the entire village.

## (2) Project Implementation and Outcomes

The beneficiaries noted that the reservoir increased their crop production, income and access to water, which they said indirectly reduced water disputes.

*“This has prevented people from [living in] poverty. Through the implementation of this project, our garden crops have doubled compared to previous years and we are very happy about this. In the previous year, our crops totaled 700 kilograms, while after implementing the project, our crops increased to 1100 kilograms and 1400 kilograms. So of course, it has had a positive impact; but who will fix the reservoir when it is broken ”*

– Male beneficiary

By both easing and increasing access to water, the beneficiaries were better able to redirect water for their crops. Prior to the project’s constructions, families struggled to access water, sometimes resulting in disputes with neighbors. One beneficiary explained that, in addition to providing clean water for drinking and crops, the reservoir reduced *“tensions among the people about water.”*

## (3) Sustainability

Male beneficiaries noted that the sustainability of this project remains highly dependent on external support. While being satisfied with the quality of the work, male beneficiaries indicated that most people in their community are too poor and lack the technical expertise to maintain or repair the project without external support. The field team noticed no structural issues with the project, and emphasized that the project was well built.

### Impressions of the DDA

Respondents believed that the DDA had thus far successfully addressed people’s needs, and acted as a solid bridge between the people and the government. The non-beneficiaries interviewed in Jani and Shpang villages agreed, holding a positive impression of the DDA. The non-beneficiaries were able to list several NABDP projects in their village and in the other nearby villages, including solar-based energy, canal construction, and embankment construction.

While male beneficiaries were overall impressed by and appreciative of the DDA’s work, they voiced several concerns. Firstly, they indicated that the projects implemented by the DDA were unevenly spread throughout the district’s villages. While the village malek emphasized his appreciation for the water reservoir, he noted that the DDA had not attempted to implement any other projects in the area for nearly two years. He noted a concern that DDA members were more likely to implement projects in areas where they lived with their families, leaving small and unrepresented villages like Koz Sejenk outside of the beneficiary list.

Secondly, the male beneficiaries and malek emphasized women’s marginal work in the DDA. They explained that, due to cultural restrictions, women were often unable to attend DDA meetings and, when they did, they often were unable to participate. The DDA was thus considered representative of women, but not their voices.

*“The future of the DDA doesn’t look good in my opinion. If they are not given support for any projects, if they don’t address people’s problems, then they will vanish sooner or later.”*

– Village malek

Despite the malek's criticism, he noted that individuals in his villages typically preferred the DDA to the local CDC. Male beneficiaries concurred, noting that the DDA was more capable of addressing the village's issues quickly than the CDCs. It is interesting to emphasize this perception as it is contrary to common assumption that more localized entities would be provide speedier responses.



*Picture 16: Malek standing by a water pump in Paktia*

**Site 1:** Construction of a Protection Wall  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Sayyid Karam  
**Village(s):** Kander Khil  
**Date Visited:** August 23, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** November 18, 2008  
**End Date:** May 30, 2009  
**Budget:** 29,408 USD  
**Donor:** Japan  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 3,529

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 MEDIUM	 MEDIUM
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Positive	

**Project Overview**

Community members were generally satisfied with the project's implementation, though some feared it was not large enough to sustain heavy flooding. The male and female beneficiaries both expressed appreciation for the project, believing it to be a crucial point of assistance from the NABDP that improved their livelihoods and lowered risks for flooding onto their land.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Male and female beneficiaries were consulted during the project prioritization and selection process. The village malek gathered the entire community, and took their vote regarding the possibility of constructing a protection wall in the village. He explained to the villagers that men would be employed to do the labor, that it would protect people's homes and that it was going to be implemented by the NABDP program of the MRRD. Interestingly, while female beneficiaries participated in the voting process, they stated that their husbands did not allow them to visit the workplace during construction. Women only heard of the project's progress from male family members, and further explained that they did not believe female DDA members were allowed to visit the site for a similarly unknown reason.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

Male beneficiaries participated in the construction of the project and, contrary to NABDP records, also contributed ten percent of the total cost. Male and female beneficiaries were very appreciative of the project and noted that it had dramatically improved families' livelihoods and safety.

Male beneficiaries concurred, explaining that the project positively benefited the area's social and economic situation by producing a *"good irrigation system and saving our gardens and land, mosque and road."*

*“This was the most important project for us because we were in danger before this project. Before the project was implemented, our lives were in danger, our livestock was in danger, our fields were in danger. Now, with the implementation of this project, we all feel very safe and secure. ”*

– Female beneficiary

Interestingly, female beneficiaries noted that the project was not completed, regardless of MRRD documentation labeling the project as completed. Female beneficiaries noted that the village contains several different tribal groups, only four of which benefit from the protection wall. The other tribes, female beneficiaries said, were going to benefit from Phase II of the project that was supposed to extend the wall’s reach, but the second phase was never implemented. This seems to happen a lot and the review has often heard similar complaints: communities tend to consider that NABDP projects as a first phase to be followed by a second one so as to benefit more people – which is not the case, in practice.

### **(3) Sustainability**

Field teams observed no structural faults with the wall, and beneficiaries further contended that the project was in good physical standing. Female beneficiaries were very optimistic about the structure’s sustainability, noting that *“since this wall is very steady and has been built professionally, it may last for 20 years.”* Another woman concurred, but noted that the area experienced waves of heavy flooding that could *“destroy the wall in an hour.”* Male beneficiaries were more critical of the protection wall, believing that it was built too low to be effective in the long-term given the area’s heavy flooding.

### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries felt that the DDA election was fair and transparent, noting that they hoped the DDA would be a sustainable entity supported by the people and government throughout Afghanistan. While women were not allowed to vote (both because men did not allow them to and due to *“our culture and tradition”*), they were satisfied with men’s involvement in the election. They believed that the fair election process produced a representative DDA that could produce infrastructure projects as well as informal legal dispute resolution. In other villages, women were often conveyed more understanding and knowledge about the local CDC but, given that Koz Sejenk did not have a CDC, it appeared that women were thus more knowledgeable about the workings of the DDA.

Female beneficiaries held a positive view of the DDA, believing that it was *“working for the improvement of the people and [the] community...[and] worked based on people’s consent.”* One female beneficiary explained that the DDA actively searched for problems within the community – whether economic, social or infrastructure-related – to address. Female beneficiaries nonetheless felt that the DDA should implement more female-centric projects, such as tailoring projects that would benefit women directly. They referred to an IRC-funded project that brought together men and women for WASH courses.

**Site 3:** Construction of a Protection Wall  
**Sector:** Natural Resource Management  
**Location:** Gardez  
**Village(s):** Dogh Abad  
**Date Visited:** August 26, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** June 20, 2011  
**End Date:** December 13, 2011  
**Budget:** 57,622 USD  
**Donor:** Norway  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 6,223

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 HIGH	 HIGH
Observation of Project's Structure	No structural issues	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

While impressions of the project were generally positive, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries gave radically different replies to their belief about the sustainability and fairness of the DDA. Some, regardless of their beneficiary status, were staunchly in support of the DDA while others accused DDA members of corruption and nepotism.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Beneficiaries reported that all community members participated in the project selection process, with male beneficiaries noting that then NABDP required full involvement from the community. Male beneficiaries further noted involvement in the form of direct oversight from the MRRD and UNDP separately from the NABDP staff, but the local malek contested this claim, noting that only the local DDA was involved. Male beneficiaries further noted that they were in favor of the project not only because it protected the area from flooding, but also because it would produce jobs for the local population.

*“Yes, there was another project – a water reservoir project – which was more important than this project. But I don’t know why that hasn’t been implemented yet. The DDA promised us that they would implement it, but they haven’t done it so far.”*

– Male beneficiary

One beneficiary, however, noted that the protection wall should not have been prioritized. The respondent noted that the community was more in need of a water reservoir project.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

While some members of the community were formally hired and paid by the DDA through the project’s budget, male beneficiaries noted that about ten percent of laborers were volunteers. These volunteers, they noted, were not hired because the DDA had already hired the maximum number of laborers. They were nonetheless interested in seeing the project

implemented, and thus offered to volunteer as laborers. Respondents reported that the project was well constructed, reducing the risk of flooding.

*“We are really satisfied with the MRRD because our homes and agricultural lands are no longer in danger of flooding anymore.”*

– Male beneficiary

### **(3) Sustainability**

All those interviewed felt that the protection wall was sustainable. However, respondents had a more nuanced position about the sustainability of the DDA itself. Several non-beneficiaries emphasized that the sustainability of the DDA largely depended on whether or not the DDA implemented infrastructure projects in the area. According to them, the community members would continue to vote for the DDA members only if the community members felt that the DDA was helping them. Without pleasing their constituencies, people would not vote for the DDA members, leading to high turnover rates. The local male, for instance, noted that the former head of the DDA to been removed from his position by the NABDP due to corruption charges.

Others went further to state that DDA’s sustainability depended on external support. Both the beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries stated that the DDA is largely financially constrained by a lack of its budget. Non-beneficiaries stated that, while the DDA sought to meet the needs of the community, its financial constraints limited its capabilities.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

While most of the non-beneficiaries interviewed had a positive perception of the DDA stated, one male non-beneficiary was very critical of the DDA.

While some of the non-beneficiaries were not aware about project implemented by the DDA, most of the non-beneficiaries appeared to have some knowledge about the DDA’s activities, noting that the DDA had implemented several projects in other villages. Projects mentioned included keeping hens, the construction of a small bridge, digging wells, the construction of protection walls. The non-beneficiaries emphasized that the DDA implemented projects that helped people, but were upset that their village had not been given more attention.

*“We don’t have good impressions of the DDA, because all of them take bribes and so far they haven’t helped the people. The DDA is not representative of our district. We didn’t select them and they have been selected by the CDC in the province”*

– Non-beneficiary

Beneficiaries were no more conclusive. A question about the fairness and transparency of the project selection process produced a heated discussion between those who believed the process was fair and those who felt it was dominated by tribal favoritism.

**Site 4:** Construction of Clinic Building  
**Sector:** Productive Rural Infrastructure  
**Location:** Gardez  
**Village(s):** Bala da  
**Date Visited:** August 25, 2012

**Project Overview**

**Start Date:** May 11, 2003  
**End Date:** August 12, 2003  
**Budget:** 40,558  
**Donor:** CIDA-General  
**# of MRRD-Reported beneficiaries:** 4,867

Overall Site Indicators		
Community Involvement and Awareness	 LOW	 LOW
Observation of Project's Structure	Resources issues reported	
Impression of the DDA	Varied	

**Project Overview**

The project's structural integrity is still sound, but the clinic suffers from a shortage of staff and medication. The beneficiaries of the clinic were critical of the local DDA, accusing it of corruption and ignoring women's right to participation in the local governance process.

**(1) Project Prioritization and Selection**

Female and male beneficiaries were left out of the project selection process, with only one being able to state basic facts about the project's prioritization. The aforementioned female beneficiary stated that the local malek donated his land to the RRD for the construction of a clinic, thereby streamlining the process to prioritize and select it by the local NABDP team.

**(2) Project Implementation and Outcomes**

The field teams did not observe any structural difficulties with the project, though they noted that the clinic suffered from a shortage of doctors and nurses as well as medication. Beneficiaries concurred, noting that the hospital was in poor condition due to such shortages.

*"I have come to this clinic from another district named Ahmad Abad. We don't have any medical clinics in our own district that is why I have come here. This is a very good clinic and everyone has benefited from this."*

– Female beneficiary

Beneficiaries were nonetheless happy about the project's implementation, noting that it was the only hospital accessible to them. Prior to the clinic's construction, families had to travel to the center of Gardez, where it was more expensive, for medical treatment. The clinic, however, provides services for free

whenever possible. Basic treatments, such as vaccinations, are given to families for free along with regular medical check ups. They were grateful for the project's implementation, and felt only that the follow up to staff it and maintain it was poor. Families from other villages even traveled to go to the clinic for assistance. Another female beneficiary

emphasized the clinic's welcoming nature, noting that *"the clinic is serving all people from every village without discrimination."*

### **(3) Sustainability**

Villagers felt like the project was very sustainable. The building itself had already lasted nearly a decade without any major issues. The only issue noted was the need for better quality care and medication.

#### **Impressions of the DDA**

Beneficiaries noted that all tribes in the village were represented in the DDA though female beneficiaries noted that youth are not represented in the DDA. They explained that cultural norms do not encourage individuals to vote for youth, typically leaving such positions to older community members. Nonetheless, the beneficiaries – male and female - were satisfied with the projects implemented in their village and thanked the DDA for assisting them.

Perceptions of the DDA varied. While most beneficiaries appreciated the projects implemented, they criticized the DDA for its perceived corruption. Beneficiaries noted a few incidents in which goods were not fairly distributed between community members, going only to the individuals with social connections and power in the area. Female beneficiaries also felt that the DDA did not pay enough attention to women's needs in the village. They criticized the NABDP for not adequately monitoring the DDA's work, explaining that not enough women were participating in the DDA's selection and prioritization processes. Another women explained that the issue was not in women's representation, highlighting that several women were already on the DDA but were still marginalized by their male counterparts.

# Conclusions

Thanks to its remarkable outreach at the district level, the NABDP has the ability to introduce higher levels of government accountability, prioritise development projects, assess humanitarian needs, monitor development implementations and bridge what is often seen as the widening gap between the government and communities. NABDP has the potential to be a rather unique non-politicized instrument of governance.

In these regards, and as “communities in rural areas that resisted the Afghan government’s attempts to interfere in their affairs never rejected the need for governance”<sup>20</sup>, District Development Assemblies and District Development Plans are probably the most adequate and flexible existing tools of governance to succeed in remote and unsafe areas with subsistence economies. However, in a clearly worsening security context<sup>21</sup>, it is probably time for UNDP to adjust the overall strategy and the specific objectives of its NABDP component.

This study does not aim to provide UNDP with strategic recommendations, as the ten surveyed provinces and the 42 observed sites are only indicative of the overall programme; however, thanks to empirical site visits, multiple focus groups, as well as formal and informal discussions with beneficiaries, community leaders or NABDP representatives, the review team was able to collect a few lessons from its fieldwork.

## I. General findings

**Capacity and accountability of DDA members:** Often the members of the volunteer *shuras*, such as the DDAs, do not have the financial resources to travel to the districts and assess needs and monitor implemented projects. Without incorporating specific training to their needs, providing them with the physical capacity and introducing effective lines of accountability, “partnering with institutionalised *shuras* has the potential to increase corrupt practices and delegitimise the body themselves”<sup>22</sup>. DDAs and their members may thus be seen as a social capital: their potential and actual capacity will deplete if misused and increase if well-used.

**Representativeness and legitimacy:** Legitimate tribal or elder’s *shuras* should be viewed as important representatives of the community who are often able to provide a degree of

<sup>20</sup> Barfield, T. and Nojumi, N. *Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability*, Middle East Policy, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Winter 2010.

<sup>21</sup> According to Gilles Dorransoro: “In seventeen (out of thirty-four) provinces, the Taliban will be in a position of strength after the withdrawal: Farah, Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul, Ghazni, Paktiya, Paktika, Wardak, Logar, Nangarhar, Laghman, Kapisa, Nuristan, Kunar, and Khost. Concretely, it will be difficult for regime officials to travel outside of the provincial capital. In twelve provinces—Badghris, Baghlan, Takhar, Sar-i Pul, Samangan, Kunduz, Kabul, Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Parwan, and Herat—the government can contain the Taliban, but they control at least one district and will be able to operate militarily in most of the province. The province of Ghor is an open space, without government control; the province of Badakhshan is an area with influential fundamentalist movements but for now, at least, they have not taken up arms. In Panjshir and the Hazara-populated regions (spread out over several provinces), the Taliban presence is marginal or nonexistent” (Dorransoro, G. *Waiting for Taliban*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2012).

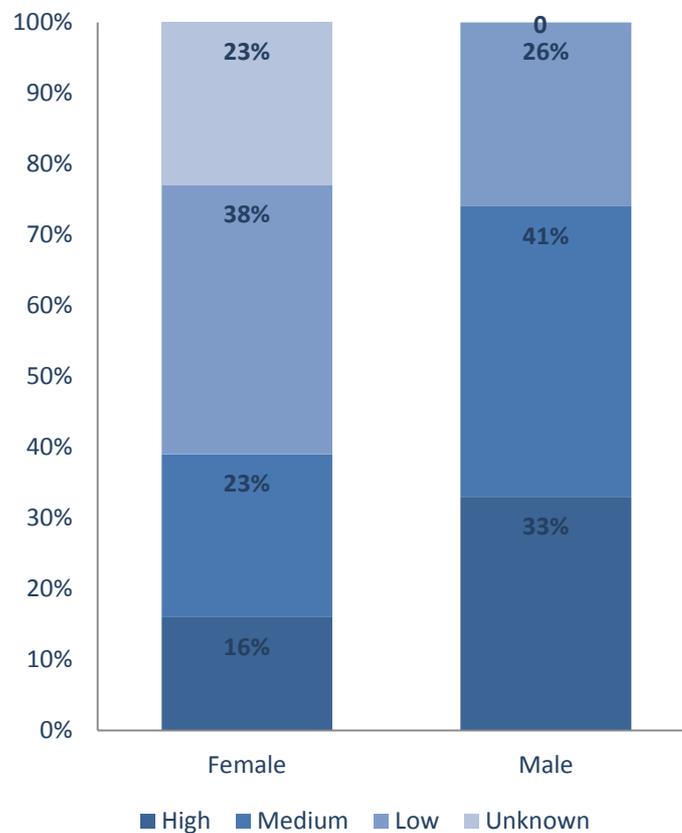
<sup>22</sup> Interview with a Development INGO, Kabul, May 2011.

governmental accountability, however their instrumentalisation into a subnational engagement strategy should be viewed through the context of their limited capacity. Where tribal elders have joined quasi-formal institutions, such as DDAs and provided they are adequately resourced for their role, these institutions have afforded the hope that they can introduce a greater degree of accountability to the government while simultaneously acting as important partners for development actors.

**Non-politicization and neutrality:** ASOP *shuras* are often accused of comprising influential individuals under the guise of ‘stabilisation’: their members are selected, rather than elected, and comprise a combination of commanders, tribal elders and religious figures, without a clear articulation of their role and links to formal government institutions. DDA members, who are indirectly elected from the communities, have maintained a narrower development focus, rather than a greater local governance role. Such a non-politicized and rather neutral approach is probably more sustainable.

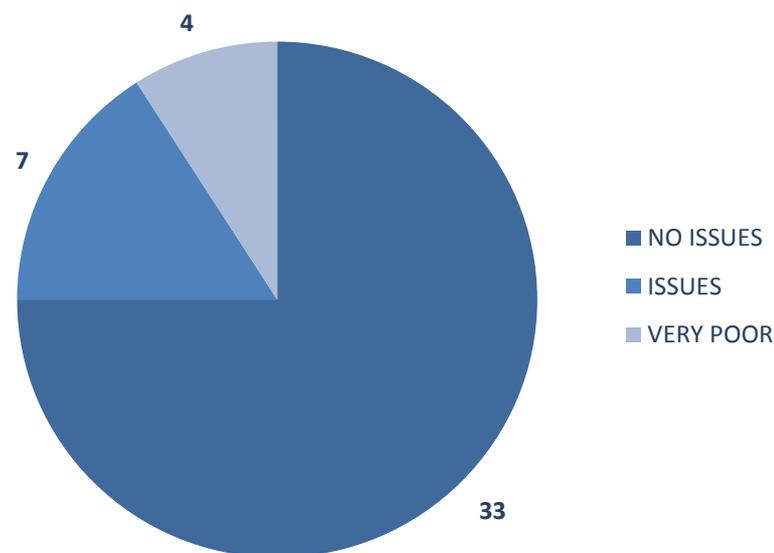
**Community Involvement:** Based on the assessment of the 42+2 sites, there are two main findings to bear in mind about community involvement: **1)** beneficiary communities tend to complain about the lack of dialogue and understanding of the NABDP projects (especially in the initial stage of a project), and male respondents considered that they had been “highly” involved in the project in only 33% of the 44 assessed sites; **2)** moreover, there is a clear distinction between male and female involvements, as female respondents either were “poorly” in 38% of the surveyed sites, or their status was ranked as “unknown” in 23% of the surveyed sites (by contrast, male were poorly involved in “only” 26% of the surveyed sites). It should be noted that those figures strongly contrast with the overall “quality” of the NABDP realisations.

*Figure 6: Community Involvement (42+2 projects / gender breakdown)*



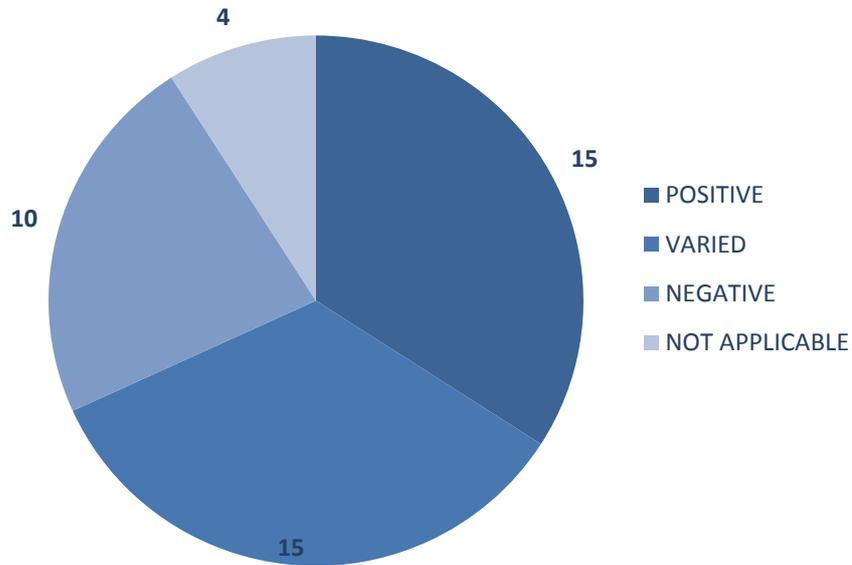
**Quality of the survey sites:** Based on the empirical assessment of the 42+2 sites by the review team, local populations tend to value the NABDP initiatives and most of them do not show any sign of structural deficiencies: 33 (out of 42+2 projects) were ranked positively, even if some serious concerns were raised for 25% of the surveyed projects. For the NAPBDP projects, those issues can be related to the corruption of DDA members, mismanagement, poor construction materials; some projects have also suffered from natural disasters or premature degradation. Last, the Aliceghan project (partly funded by UNDP, but not directly related to the NABDP) is of course an exceptional case, as the root causes of its failure are multiple and cannot be assessed here.

*Figure 7: Quality of the project*



**Impression of the DDA:** Our assessment of 42 NABDP sites shows the ambiguous nature of the relationship between local communities and DDA members: in 15 sites out of 40, the perception of the DDA was positive, as shown in the figure 8 below, but for the majority of the surveyed beneficiary communities (15+10 sites) the perception of local DDAs was either lukewarm or negative. If the sample size is too reduced to raise any clear conclusion, our focus groups pointed to a number of recurrent reproaches: **1) suspicion of corruption** – “DDA members are not from here, they have their own interests and most of them are corrupted”; **2) conflicting interests with CDCs** – “We don’t know why there are so many contradictory bodies with overlapping functions and authorities. It’s a waste of money and people need immediate action”; **3) lack of legitimacy and capacity** – “They only represent themselves and their families and there is no reason why their should make decisions on our lives. Those people have not been elected by anyone in this community or district”.

Figure 8: Impression of the DDA



II. Specific lessons learned

Table 4: Synthesis of the strengths and weaknesses of the 42 observed sites

STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly satisfactory outreach of the NABDP programme through the DDAs;</li> <li>Capacity to work in Southern and Eastern provinces, with satisfactory outcomes and a long-term impact;</li> <li>Well developed structure and mechanisms, socially accepted at the outset by local communities;</li> <li>Very visible and tangible results (even if beneficiaries do not systematically identify)</li> <li>Interest from local communities, governmental, non-governmental and international organisations.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear financial management role and clear default trust between NABDP and the DDAs (FMOs may come unannounced sometimes, creating a potential conflict);</li> <li>Poor financial disbursement, with funds too often dispersed all at once, not by stages and at the approval of financial management officer;</li> <li>Lack of actual focus on rural programming, unclear project allocation and beneficiary selection: due to access and capacity constraints of the DDAs, the projects are going to the places closer to district and/or provincial centers.</li> <li>Limited female and youth role which are both terribly marginalized. Youth play little to no role and, when they do, it's notable to mention that they were nearly always young women (=female quota with someone who is not entitled to speak anyways).</li> <li>Lack of awareness of UNDP, MRRD or NABDP programmes among local populations (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries). Despite the signs everywhere, the average villager does not know the supporting agency.</li> <li>No cohesive DIAG / CNTF programming -- they seem ineffective at best, and are generally indistinguishable from other programs.</li> <li>Serious concerns about project <i>sustainability</i>, as local communities generally do not understand that they have to take care of it and, even if they do, they do not have the mechanisms to do. Such a central question (sustainability through awareness raising, sensitization, handover, ownership, etc.) should be a part of the planning for the project.</li> </ul>

### III. Future strategic trade-offs

**Actual management and monitoring?** Most likely, over the next two years, the already shrinking area of operations of NABDP in Afghanistan will be drastically reduced, as more and more districts are no-go areas or off-limits. If the calendar is unknown, the future is unfortunately foreseeable, and leads to two conclusions: 1) Areas of Operations: in the most dangerous environments, including highly criminalised environments, NABDP will not be able to work anymore (manage and monitor) and remote management<sup>23</sup>. As such, the NABDP should only work in areas where both its international and national staff can work; 2) Service Delivery: the main prerequisite to acceptance by local population and successful long-term implementation for NABDP relies on its competence to fulfil commitments and demonstrate tangible results for targeted beneficiaries. In theory and practice, the NABDP should thus favour a long-term, comprehensive, and cooperative approach in “green areas” where assistance and development are still realistic options: from the selection process to the implementation and the final evaluation, NABDP should be able to *directly* manage the projects it is involved in.

**Sustainability and evolution of the model?** In terms of their sustainability, district *shuras* such as ASOP with paid stipends and internationally funded institutional support, are not likely to endure due to their dependence on international funding for their operating costs. Whereas DDAs, providing they continue to be occupied by regular programming, a clear mandate, an involvement in local governance matters and perhaps most importantly a formal inclusion into a renewed, refocused and improved IDLG’s subnational structure, have the greatest potential to properly fulfil their mandate. However, a transition strategy should soon be developed to progressively absorb the “political” mandate of ASOPs, under the supervision and guidance of a more formal structure (IDLG): such a significant shift will of course question NABDP’s current strategy/approach/role towards local communities.

**International/UNDP commitment for 2015-2024?** Sub-national governance programmes (NABDP) and bodies (DDAs and DDPs) at the district level require a formalisation of their roles and a national approach to building the capacity of these quasi-governmental bodies if they are to eventually transform into district councils and provide a level of accountability to district government and act as possible partners for development agencies. If there is not a continued and sustained strategic and financial *investment* in sub-national governance from the international community (and namely UNDP through the NABDP) then the uneven and fragile gains that have been achieved will be lost. To keep developing ambitious sub-national initiatives, UNDP may thus have to make a strategic virtue of necessity, in a drastically

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<sup>23</sup> Among the 35 risks or concerns highlighted by a panel of 38 stakeholders interviewed by Tearfund in Afghanistan on remote management, the key issues were: potential deterioration in programme quality, deterioration in the potential to ensure effective and rigorous monitoring, reduced regularity of visits and access to project implementation areas, inaccuracy of project data and reporting, limited capacity of own and/or partner personnel, weak technical oversight of project implementation, poor communication between country and field offices, increased security threat and risks to personnel and/or communities and beneficiaries increased pressure and expectation (social and political) on local staff, in absence of senior national and expatriate staff, increased risk of the occurrence of fraud and corruption; organizational liability increased. (See Bryony NORMAN, *Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments*, Tearfund 2012. It should also be noted that the author of this report is more skeptical about the actual efficiency and effectiveness of remote management than most actors operating in Afghanistan; however, and after almost six years in this country, the author has witnessed multiple cases of increased corruption, food diversion, mismanagement, institutionalized nepotism, etc. involving projects run by USAID, the UN, IOs, INGOs, that had chosen remote management as a contingency plan in “unsafe” or “remote” areas.

different political and financial context, by favouring long-term impact programmes while having a close control on its projects.



*Picture 17: Women in Kandahar (January 2013)*

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## Contacts:

### **Samuel Hall.**

Qala-e-Fatullah, Street 5, #2

Kabul, AFGHANISTAN

Kabul: +93 796 60 60 28

Paris: +33 666 48 88 32

[development@samuelhall.org](mailto:development@samuelhall.org)

Visit us at [samuelhall.org](http://samuelhall.org)