



Case Study

# Persons with Disabilities in Afghanistan

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**Towards Inclusive Governance**

Promoting participation of disadvantaged groups in Asia-Pacific

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## Acronyms

AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ASGP	Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme
CISEP	Afghan Civil Society Empowerment Programme
JEMB	Joint Electoral Management Body
NDC	National Disability Commission
NPAD	National Programme for Action on Disability
MMD	Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
NPAD	National Programme for Action on Disability

## Introduction

### Statement of the problem

Disability and extreme poverty are interdependent, resulting from ignorance, low expectations, prejudice and lack of opportunities (Elwan 1999). An important priority for disability policy is *capacity-building* of disabled persons' organizations. This question arises because while poverty, ignorance, low expectations and prejudice may be the lowest common denominators uniting victims of discrimination, their overall experience is rarely uniform. Vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms differ in different places and with different individuals. So do discriminatory practices. The problem is compounded because the government, donors and NGOs, although perhaps in tentative agreement on the aggregate, often differ on how to define equality, equity and mainstreaming. Hence, while a broad human rights based approach (HRBA) is fine in principle, it is largely contingent on the local context during implementation. Here, then, we have a problem on which there is little agreement about causes or solutions, and where as usual, the devil is in the details.

In the context of the participation and representation of disabled and marginalized people in democratic elections in post-Taliban Afghanistan, this study explores the above question through extensive desk review and survey research. The study is a work-in-progress but has nonetheless revealed important patterns of exclusion and discrimination.

This study reveals various obvious and non-obvious obstacles to inclusive governance facing disabled and marginalized groups in Afghanistan, including socially entrenched discriminatory practices aggravated by, among others, the impact of war, predictable and unpredictable reactions of people towards these obstacles, preference falsification, gender-based discrimination.

Programmatic entry points are identified for improved participation and representation. These include structural entry points (e.g. promoting institutional reform, improving physical access for all, reducing economic and communication barriers, etc.) through, among others, greater state intervention. Behavioral entry points are also considered as is the need to capitalize on human agency through sensitization, outreach, advocacy and empowerment measures.

### Timeliness and linkages of study

This study comes at an opportune moment as the Government of Afghanistan and the international community are embarking on a human rights based approach (HRBA) to disability issues in a systematic and concerted manner. The goal of this HRBA is to promote an inclusive, dignified, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabling impairment in Afghanistan. Accordingly, disabled Afghans are entitled to benefit from the full range of civil and political, and socio-economic and cultural rights embodied in the Afghan Constitution and international human rights instruments.

National policy strives to create a barrier-free society for all based on the principles of participation, integration and the equalization of opportunities, as defined by the United Nations in their World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons; the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons; The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region and the on going elaboration for the International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights of Disabled Persons. In doing so, the government of Afghanistan gives priority to enable disabled people to take charge of their lives by removing barriers which deter them from full participation in society.

The disabled person is recognized in national policy as an individual, as well as a member of society and therefore deals with all aspects of his or her life (Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled 2003). Some key areas have been identified which need special attention based on the perceived needs and priorities of disabled Afghans. These include supporting disabled persons' organizations, especially disabled women's groups; raising awareness to educate and change public attitudes towards disabled persons; prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation, including health care and therapeutic aids; the development of guidelines for accessible environment and facilities, including access to information; education for all; accessible vocational training programmes and facilities; and an affirmative action plan to ensure that disabled persons have equal employment opportunities, including sheltered employment. Furthermore, the inclusion of disabled persons into society requires physical and programmatic access to cultural and recreational activities, including sports, as well as access to social welfare, accessible housing and public transport. Training will be given to personnel involved in the planning and provision of services for disabled persons. The Afghan government, in coordination with the National Disability Commission (NDC), will take the lead role in collecting and disseminating information, as well as conducting research into the needs of disabled persons.

The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD)<sup>1</sup> will take the lead role for the coordination of implementing national programmes as part of the Comprehensive National Policy on Disability. Designated ministries have been assigned special roles and responsibilities to implement the national policy. The MMD and related government agencies will work closely with national and international organizations, including disability organizations, to realize this policy. The MMD and NDC will collaborate with other agencies, particularly disabled person's organizations, in order to monitor its implementation.

- Linkage is envisaged to the new 3 year policy framework and action plan due to be approved by cabinet by Jan 2006 and also the Justice programme – Justice in the Community.
- Lessons learnt from this study will reinforce nationally obtained lessons already embedded in NPAD's (National Programme for Action on Disability) work to ensure it feeds into policy and programming.
- The findings of this study will try to further the advisory capacity of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the nodal body

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) has now been merged with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to form a new entity, The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). As the survey covers the periods before and after this merger, the old and new entities are both cited.

## Towards Inclusive Governance

mandated with providing suggestions and corrective measures in every level of governance for the betterment of human rights in the country based on international human rights principles and standards.

- The hope is that this study will be timely and relevant to the ongoing democratic transition and associated general elections held in Afghanistan.
- It will also be in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals review of Afghanistan.
- The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) planned a review in the area.

## Rationale for study

It follows that for concerted attention to participation, representation and empowerment of disabled persons in Afghanistan, the types and patterns of exclusion and discrimination need to be adequately researched and understood if we are to devise, fund, implement and supervise human rights based programmes to alleviate the disadvantages faced by persons with disabilities.

### Objectives:

- Demographic focus: disabled women and men
- Thematic focus: participation and representation

## Baseline Conditions

### Demographics

Available literature suggests that accurate statistics on rates of impairment are difficult to come by. Latest estimates place the number at about 4 percent of the population (approximately one million people). The Afghanistan Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs estimates that the current number of disabled persons at about 300,000,<sup>2</sup> but the actual number is likely to be significantly higher. Disability is a highly subjective phenomenon and many might not have wanted to be counted as such. The World Health Organization and United Nations estimate that the actual number of disabled persons in Afghanistan is closer to 2 million people, which corresponds with interim figures available from the Afghanistan Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (Faizi/MMD 2003).

It would perhaps be in order here to compare **demographic gender differentials** with available evidence from literature and other countries. Ann Elwan (1999: 9-10), citing many sources, writes that in general, where there was a gender difference, survey results yielded higher disability rates for women than men in developed countries, and lower rates for women in developing countries. The UN noted that differences in the percentage of males and females classified as disabled were partly determined by the type of screening used in the survey, with male/female sex ratios higher when impairment screens were used. One of the possible conclusions from this was that severe impairment may be male-dominated, or that additional survey probes were needed when surveying women using impairment screens. Disability rates for children were slightly higher for males than for females. At ages 15-59, rates for females were slightly higher than for males in developing countries, and at ages over 60, the rates for males tended to be higher than for females. Individual survey results vary greatly. Estimates from India and Pakistan indicate that male disability rates are higher than female rates. The lower overall number of women than men with disabilities, despite the longer life span of women, could indicate that girls and women with disabilities receive less care and support and die earlier. Another possibility is that the gender division of labour is such that disabled women contributing to household activity are not identified as disabled, whereas disabled men are more visible. A higher incidence of disability is discernable among females aged 15-44 than in the same male age cohort; the fact that there are more disabled men than women could be explained by women in this age group suffering more from ill-health as a consequence of too many pregnancies, inadequate health and medical care and poor nutrition.

### Social condition

Disabled persons are generally regarded as being weak, inactive, unproductive and overly reliant on others. Such attitudes serve to exclude and isolate them from society. In general “disabilist” language and attitudes perpetuate the exclusion and segregation of disabled people and contributes significantly to their prevalence among the chronically

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<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs estimates and communication with author/s.

poor. This has been borne out in our own survey by interviewees. Generalized views and beliefs that classify all disabled people as weak, dependent, unable to work, unproductive and needing social protection, regardless of their real potential (all characteristics noted in Afghanistan), places them in a permanently vulnerable position. Many disabled people, therefore, have very low expectations and lack self-esteem and, hence, power. Years of exclusion and negative attitudes only serve to make the situation worse and make it all the more difficult for disabled persons to achieve their rights and fulfill their aspirations.

Disabilist language appears as an accepted feature of life for the disabled persons in Afghanistan. It is a feature of ongoing oppression that is often overlooked although it has profound effects. The disabled are often referred to in derogatory terms by the general public, either as direct abuse or out of ignorance. Disabled persons themselves report that the main forms of discrimination they experience are verbal abuse and complete indifference they also reported that they are spoken of in such a derogatory manner by their neighbours that they felt unable to socialize with them. This affects whole families and is quite a common experience for parents of disabled children.

Having to face constant verbal abuse and derogatory comments forces many disabled people to withdraw from society. This leads to a sense of fear and apprehension among the disabled and has implications for the development of a disability movement and for the success of disabled persons' organizations as, lacking confidence and awareness, they are unlikely to want to be part of a movement for social change.

In Afghanistan being able to work and provide for your family is integral to defining the "self". It is such a strongly held social standard that to be perceived as being dependent in any way is shameful. Shame, naturally, is the most widespread feeling disabled people have about themselves and which already came out as a manifest as well as underlying factor in the survey being undertaken for this study (Action on Disability and Development 2005).

## Economic condition

Unemployment rates amongst disabled people are as high as 80 percent.<sup>3</sup> Disability can substantially increase the risk of poverty and it is also often a symptom of poverty. This cyclical nature makes disabled people's poverty particularly difficult to address and requires recognition and support from governments, aid agencies and NGOs. The effects of poverty on disabled people are harsh and they are more severely affected by conflict situations and natural disasters. They tend to occupy the most vulnerable social and economic positions in society making it difficult for them and their families to deal with unexpected events (Action on Disability and Development 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan National Programme for Action on Disability estimates and internal communication with author/s.

## Research Findings: Obstacles for Inclusive Governance

### Research method and limitations

Measuring disability by statistical and ethnographic tools is fraught with difficulty. Part of the reason is that there is no clearly agreed definition of disability and also because disability is a highly relative and subjective factor.

The government and international agencies, as well as some national NGOs have carried out or are in the process of carrying out surveys. However, the results of these surveys are still of a provisional nature, or are based on small-*n* populations, anecdotal evidence or case studies. Their methodologies raise doubts on their reliability, validity and representativeness because of questions related to poor standardization and quality control and non-comparable estimates. Thus, little definitive information may be gleaned on underlying patterns and causality from available data beyond general inferences and broad estimates. Thus, little definitive information may be gleaned about underlying patterns and causality from available data beyond general inferences and broad estimates.

In Afghanistan, research is complicated by the insecurity prevailing in various parts of the country and the legacy of decades of conflict and any serious qualitative or quantitative research effort is compromised because of this. Reaching marginalized sections of society, and especially women, is a problem for researchers. This study and its findings, particularly the emphasis it places on women and gender-related questions, are thus inevitably affected by the above limitations and, as this study is still a work-in-progress, the results should be viewed as preliminary and non-prescriptive.

As part of this study, UNDP Afghanistan and its partner agencies are investigating the propensity, prevalence and cause of the various difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in voting and political participation through a literature review, expert interviews and a 'quick and dirty' exploratory survey, followed up with focus group interviews. The first survey questions were loosely structured and formulated to capture the maximum amount of relevant information, in the spirit of a casual and friendly dialogue. They were also intended to capture any area-based variation of the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and also situate their difficulties, if any, of voting and political participation within the broader context of daily living. Respondents were encouraged to enthusiastically and answer all the questions as fully as possible. It was stressed that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and that whatever they wished to say was equally valid.

### **The more things change, the more they stay the same...**

Indeed, even the destructive effects of modern war, from which seemingly nothing can escape, is no match against the entrenched institutions of social relations and mores. Socially embedded discriminatory practices and institutions continue replicating

themselves as ever and, occasionally, perhaps in newer, subtler and more insidious ways as result of war. The diminishing stock of social capital and exacerbated effects of social dislocation due to the war, if anything, make the task of alleviating the plight of the discriminated more intractable than before.

The survey provides a profile of social exclusion among disabled and related populations in Kandahar. Exclusionary practices in the various interstices of society have become systematized and entrenched and work against the interests and goal of inclusive governance. What follows is an account of common responses from interviewees to standard survey questions and our attempt to categorize those responses in terms that may be relevant to deducing policy for inclusive governance of marginalized groups:

### **Irrational reactions**

Irrational reactions are that category of responses where some survey respondents to the question “What, if any, are some of the difficulties in your area that trouble your right to vote and/or participate in politics?” replied rather strikingly: “I don’t have any business with politics. I am a poor woman” or “I have no problem. I (am) even happy on death rather than my life (sic).”

### **Rational reactions**

In general, we find predictable and pragmatic responses to an entire range of concerns, from the dramatic to the mundane, among some extremely marginalized disabled Afghans. Rational concerns over security have weighed heavily on their decision not to vote. Security concerns, as variously reported by survey respondents, have ranged from general lawlessness, specific threats to murder or bodily harm from malicious political interests, or even rumors of enemy attack. Other concerns, too, such as joblessness, cost of living or voting, burden of household chores, family responsibilities and limitations on movement, contempt or neglect from others, etc., are reasons cited for staying away.

The picture that emerges of this marginalized group is the recognizable one of extreme vulnerability, subsistence or below subsistence living, very limited coping capacity, no inclination for deferred gratification, and hence very restrictive strategic agency or capacity for strategic choice.

### **Infrastructural and institutional issues**

Infrastructure problems too have directly plagued participation: bad roads, inaccessible polling stations, personal immobility and lack of good wheelchairs or cycles, or suitable people to assist with travel to vote, have all elicited the expected decision of self-exclusion among the disabled. Yet, there is clear and overwhelming interest, unambiguously voiced by these respondents, in a future of inclusive politics and improved governance in Afghanistan.

In another recent survey, conducted by the UNICEF-supported Afghan Disabled Union, most disabled respondents felt that the new constitution was unsatisfactory as it only contains a short paragraph about them. Given Afghanistan’s fledgling institutions, it isn’t entirely surprising that this dissatisfaction extends to the performance of line ministries. Indeed, only a minority of people appears to be satisfied with the government’s performance and service delivery; the same people believe that the government should

seek outside help, including from international agencies and disabled persons' organizations, for improvement variously on all those scores (ADU 2004).

### **The rational irrational?**

More challenging is the problem of decisions that seem individually rational but might well be collectively irrational. How can that which is in the rational interest of an individual be bad for society? In this respect, the literature on the discriminatory effects of preference formation and on poverty traps is instructive.

Ethnically segregated communities, for instance, are known to emerge where individuals possess 'mild' preferences to living in neighbourhoods with ethnic majorities, even if all individuals would ideally wish to live in integrated communities. Hence, apparently harmless mild preferences of otherwise well-meaning individuals can lead to detrimental, exclusionary outcomes. Similarly, peer group effects that lead to poverty traps are sometimes known to appear rational and sound to an individual who is a group member but when all members behave similarly, it collectively proves detrimental to the group as a whole by entrapping its members in impoverishing conditions. In other words, when the behaviour of one group member is sufficiently dependent on the behaviour of others, this can lead to self-reinforcing behaviour. Within a given behavioral configuration, however, each individual may be acting 'rationally'. But that does not mean that each configuration is equally desirable from the perspective of the members of the group in the sense of avoiding a poverty trap (Durlauf 2003:7).

In the present study exploring barriers to inclusive governance of marginalized persons with disabilities in Afghanistan, the 'I don't have any business with politics. I am a poor woman', or 'I have no problem' type responses are, of course, obvious suspects in this category of individually rational but collectively detrimental responses. Non-voting or non-participation in politics for reasons related to disability or other physical impairments, as reported in the survey, may be other examples of self-denial and a non-engaging outlook to life that may ultimately be detrimental for the individual, as well as polity. Joblessness, costs and inflation, burden of daily subsistence or household chores, contempt or neglect from election or government and non-government officials and the general public – are all real problems but predictable responses to which, as have been reported in the survey, can lead counter-intuitively to unpredictable and detrimental outcomes in future. In short, the opportunity cost of not voting and not participating can be very high indeed.

### **International affairs as barrier to local governance**

Little information is available in social science literature to explain the embroiling effect of 'reputation' as succinctly as the cliché above. This is the plight of the international community in Afghanistan. The unpopularity of foreigners and the American-led international coalition and of international reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan is reflected in repeated comments from interviewees. Many have suggested they refuse to vote because the elections have been organized by foreigners. However, these sentiments are often transient and such barriers unique to Afghanistan and in places heavily reliant on yet wanting of international assistance, but that does not mean this problem is any less "development-relevant".

## Gender-based discrimination

Disabled women are doubly discriminated upon as they are victimized because of their disability and because of their gender. Our limited survey has revealed glimpses of this very critical problem. However, while the data collected is gender-segregated, there was limited opportunity to probe and explore specific manifestations of gender-based discrimination which would result in a more sophisticated understanding of contentious issues. Nevertheless, women interviewees have unambiguously and repeatedly mentioned that they have not been allowed to vote or participate in politics because they are women. The “women don’t know anything...” syndrome is alive and well in Afghanistan, even among men who self-confessedly don’t know much!

Available evidence suggests compelling differences between disabled women and men in gainful labour/ economic activities and access to the economic sphere. This is perhaps indicative of formative discrimination of women, and disabled women in particular, that begins early in their own homes (Elwan 1999).

For example, in an authoritative work for the World Bank, (Elwan 1999: 29-31), it is reported from multiple sources that disabled women are, in general, more disadvantaged than disabled men. In developed countries, the income, education and employment level indicators of disabled people show consistent, but not necessarily large gender differentials. The difficulties faced by disabled girls can start at birth, and if allowed to survive, they can go on to face discrimination within the family, receive less care and food, and be left out of family interactions and activities. They also have less access to health care and rehabilitation services, and fewer education and employment opportunities. Disabled girls and women are at high risk of being abused physically and mentally, sometimes by those within the household. Abuse from outside the family is often unreported because of the additional shame to the family which is already stigmatized for having a disabled daughter.

Having a disabled person in the family is sometimes thought to damage marriage prospects. A disabled man is much more likely to marry than a disabled woman. It appears that universally, the incidence of marriage for disabled women is lower than that for disabled men. Disability often blocks the chances of a fulfilling life for a woman, but this appears to be less the case for men. The access problems confronting women with disabilities are more severe in rural areas; higher illiteracy rates and longer distances compound the difficulties of inadequate access to information, health care and rehabilitation services.

The Blind Men Association in India attributes the higher rates of blindness among rural women to the lower likelihood of females to seek medical care in a town. Data from one source in Angola indicate that 23 percent of the female victims of landmines had prosthetics, compared to 37 percent of the male victims. Although men tend to receive more care, including treatment, women are more likely to be caregivers for disabled children and other family members, meaning that they are often unable to invest in themselves. Moreover, in some areas, mothers are usually blamed and stigmatized for the birth of a disabled child. It is not unusual in some areas for disabled women to be kept hidden, and never receive visitors. A kind of disablement that does not enter into the usual statistics, noting that the lassitude and inertia observed among poverty-

stricken people are often due to malnutrition, endemic diseases and infection, with their attendant possible impairment of both physical and mental development.

In Afghanistan, a survey of 350 people in Kabul city indicates that persons with disabilities are mainly involved in low-income jobs such as cleaners, carpentry, housewife, painter, wood seller, etc. 59 percent of men but only 10 percent of women had jobs before they became disabled and 45 percent of persons with disabilities have lost their jobs because of their disabilities (ADU 2004).

Women in Afghanistan are usually confined to their homes and have limited access to the public sphere. It is small wonder then that women with disabilities do not have access and thus do not reflect issues related to access. Almost a third of the respondents of the ADU survey in Kabul, most of whom were women of course, reported that the question on accessibility did not apply to them (ADU 2004). The overall condition in rural areas is understood to be much worse.

### **Preference falsification or naïveté?**

Another interesting revelation evident from our survey is a disconnect between some of the problems and causes identified. This disconnect, by implication, must impact the nature of remedies sought. For instance, and this repeatedly in evidence, a problem reported by interviewees is the neglectful and contemptuous attitude shown towards them by society and the government. But when asked “What do you think are some of the specific causes behind those difficulties?” the same interviewees answered that economic conditions and joblessness were among the causes for the difficulties they experienced. This begs the question: Will simply improving economic conditions and providing jobs *really* help alleviate the attitudinal hostility shown towards persons with disabilities and end the discrimination they face from society?

Clearly, the causes and implied solutions are not germane to the problems. But why this disconnect? It seems there can be two possible answers to this. The first one is simple. The respondents, in their naïveté, have misconstrued the problem and misidentified the underlying causes. But how can this be? How can so many people be so naïve? Doesn't such a conclusion go against the received wisdom of participatory research? After all, it is the victims who are expected to have a better insight to their plight rather than independent, outside observers.

This brings us to the other possible explanation. Could it be that there is something preventing the respondents from revealing their true wishes? The possibility of such a paradoxical situation is explained in behavioral economics by the insightful term “preference falsification” (Kuran 1997). What it means is that because of, among others, group pressures, fear of social sanction or reprisal, the policy preferences that people express in public often differ from those they hold privately. Thus, people rely on the prevailing climate of opinion in developing their personal belief systems that underpin their policy choices and preferences.

In the case of a person with disability from the marginalized sections in Afghanistan, the prevailing climate of opinion is one of contempt and ridicule and neglect towards the disabled. Is it too far-fetched then that victims of such practices will internalize such discrimination and rationalize that choice by de-emphasizing the attitudinal hostility,

which is the real or at least pre-eminent cause of problems and, instead, emphasize or focus on other “safer” issues, e.g. such as economic ones? That is not to suggest that economic issues are not relevant. The point is that solutions premised on economic aspects alone will fall short of solving the problems.

## Strategies for Inclusive Governance

There are a number of strategies for inclusive governance which can be envisaged to surmount the obstacles to inclusive governance for marginalized persons with disabilities.

One overarching and overwhelming sentiment or mandate that needs to be made clear at the outset is there is no support for retreat of the State, despite calls for enhanced efforts by non-governmental and civil society organizations. Almost all interviewees suggested that the Afghanistan government should not be in competition with the non-state sector but rather complement existing efforts.

The obvious strategic strains apparent and inferable are also the ones referred to variously in the available literature and guides to inclusive governance. Within variations, the following, presented without preamble and “as is”, are familiar and sound. These are illustrative not prescriptive and creative adaptation and application is encouraged.

### Structural entry points

Structural entry points subsume interventions that primarily serve to build socio-economic institutional capacities and increase institutional access for the traditionally excluded and disadvantaged persons with disabilities. As such, the relevant logical approach is to formulate and implement programming, as appropriate, that:

- **Alleviates institutional discrimination** by affording gender sensitive legal protection, implementing institutional reform and capacity-building, and implementing anti-discrimination laws already on the statute books to benefit persons with disabilities;
- **Promotes outreach to disadvantaged groups** for effective and targeted dissemination of information and increasing awareness of their rights within the context of human rights based approaches;
- **Provides physical access** for persons with disabilities to polling stations, voting material, means of transport to and from such places, and for unhindered access to public facilities in general; introduce late opening hours for polling booths;
- **Removes barriers to communication** by providing signage and communication which is appropriate to people with disabilities, as well as access to professionals (interpreters, psychologists) to help them engage in the civic process;
- **Increases representation** of persons with disabilities and women with disabilities in the political, government/ bureaucracy/ election management and legal system;
- **Reduces economic barriers** preventing disabled persons with special focus towards disabled women.

## Behavioral entry points

Strategies that cater to these structural factors alone may not be adequate to ensure functional inclusive governance of marginalized groups as barriers are often of a behavioral and attitudinal nature. While there is indeed some circular causality between behavioral and structural factors, specific measures focusing on behavioral and attitudinal change of human agency are nevertheless necessary. Available literature on inclusive governance falls somewhat short on this particular point.

Behavioral aspects to governance are considered “soft” issues and discounted against the “hard” and easy-to-measure “economistic” structural approaches. Predicting and measuring changes in human agency and their social impact is, however, less easy. Among other things, one of the problems with these so-called hard structural approaches in post-conflict situations is that they tend to be top-down and externally imposed. But the management of inclusive governance is an intensely communicative, dialogic experience in which “speech acts” are accepted or rejected through shared understanding and social negotiation and collaboration (Habermas 1987).

Hence, externally imposed, top-down strategic directions of structural measures, such as legal directives, do not necessarily translate into discrimination-free administrative actions on the ground, and nor do they provide clear guidance in the management of complex issues relating to disability. In contrast, the complex phenomenon of inclusive governance necessarily involves processes for inter-subjective understanding, social solidarity and ethical motivations – as opposed to abstract obligatory obedience to laws and institutions – that are beyond the scope of purely structural/ institutional measures (Keeffe 2002).

This disjuncture between familiar social-relational life and externally-imposed formal institutions manifests itself in the form of reinforced exclusionary practices and societal tension in response to development programming with emancipatory, anti-discriminatory intent.

It is even clear what the behavioral and attitudinal barriers to inclusive governance of marginalized groups are:

- **Insensitivity or lack of awareness** of particular civic engagement needs of disabled women and men;
- **Stereotypic views** by mainstream society that work against integration and inclusion of disabled and marginalized groups;
- **Insufficient support for alternative mechanisms** of civic engagement that are sensitive to their needs;
- **Limited communication** between the “mainstream” and marginalized groups;
- **Lack of trust** of formal institutions among marginalized groups; and
- **Fear of marginalized groups** to reprisals and social ostracism seeking to put them ‘in their place’.

What is less clear, of course, is what to do in terms of programming for change with regard to the behavioral and attitudinal barriers described above.

## Capacity development of human agency

The most common route to surmount these barriers is to encourage civil society and assist in the growth of social capital and formulate programming to that end. In Afghanistan, UNDP has two programmes that are of direct programming relevance to encourage civil society and social capital – the Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP) and the Afghan Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CISEP). (Extracts from their programme documents are included in the Appendix for reference). Both ASGP and CISEP are and should be priority captive candidates for NPAD (National Programme for Action on Disability) and MMD (Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled) – the nodal agencies responsible for persons with disabilities – for drawing linkages and exploring inter-agency collaboration.

But the primary difficulty with programming to encourage civil society and social capital is that both concepts – social capital and civil society – are notoriously imprecise. Civil society is most often posed in polemical or normative contexts and is fraught with definitional and boundary problems (Edwards and Foley 1998). Social capital has been known to be non-neutral, values-laden, morally confused and has the characteristics of a double-edged sword in that it may do both good and harm by encouraging vibrant grassroots democracies as well as helping organized crime and criminals (Franklin 2004). Programming outcomes and impacts have been known to be compromised due to the abovementioned conceptual confusion and empirical imprecision.

Therefore, in addition to enhanced service delivery and tighter quality controls across the board, the following may be treated as pointers to improved “inclusive governance” programming for capacity development of human agency:

- **Sensitize** disabled people, government and non-government officials, stakeholders and the general public through awareness campaigns of the rights of persons with disabilities;
- **Advocate** against the entrenched discriminatory practices and stereotypic views held against persons with disabilities;
- **Conduct outreach** targeted towards marginalized persons with disabilities to instill confidence in them and allay their fears and mistrust against mainstream institutions;
- **Increase local content** in all development programmes and civic/election management teams, as well as make all programmes less Kabul-centric and reach out to the remotest corners, within the possibilities afforded by security conditions, in order to enhance the legitimacy of authorities;
- **Formulate social and economic empowerment programmes** that provide private incentives to constructive choices by beneficiaries, i.e. incentives that are manifestly stronger than the constraints that limit those choices (such as ‘shame’ and ‘honour’ based inhibitions, in addition to harder and more conventional constraints); utilize sociological and psychological perspectives, such as ‘social multipliers’, in addition to the formal logic and rigour of economics to plan and analyse such interactions and to capture a ‘richer’ causal picture of social change.
- **Fund research and “network analysis”** studies of associational and membership groups (along the lines of Savage, Tampubolon and Warde, 2004)

- so as to open up the multiplicity of interactions that contribute to social networks, and leads to a more complex understanding of those kinds of networks that might facilitate trust and activism and those which do not
- **Build the capacity of disabled peoples' organizations** active in inclusive governance programming so that they may identify and reduce the barriers to collaboration and communicative action, thereby reducing the possibilities of value laden assumptions in communities that lead to stereotyping and unlawful decisions.

This study shows that there are still many gaps in our knowledge. Some of the gaps which need to be addressed by researchers should consist of:

- (1) probing the 'gendered paths' of apparently gender-neutral discrimination, such as institutional discrimination;
- (2) exploring poverty-related factors in the nexus between poverty and disability, or to form research questions taking gender, disability and poverty as dependent variables;
- (3) studying variance in discrimination based on regional, ethnic/racial differences and customs and conducting research on household-based discrimination, its impact in the public sphere and attendant micro-macro links;
- (4) conducting basic research on validating measures and tools in the subject.

More innovative programming and emancipatory goals can only be reached through finer analysis of data, and systematic collection of statistical and empirical evidence; employing appropriate anthropological and participant-observation methods; sharper analysis of gender effects/stereotypes/social-relational dimensions of marginalized groups and poverty/discrimination traps; stronger political and donor commitment, and greater awareness of the opportunity costs in neglecting the disabled and a human rights based inclusive governance approach.

## Appendix 1

### Inclusion of marginalized groups survey questionnaire

Introduction: UNDP Afghanistan and its partner agencies are investigating the propensity, prevalence and cause of the various difficulties faced by ‘persons with disabilities’ in voting and political participation. In order to complete this investigation, the following questions need to be answered. The questions are few, loosely structured and broadly conceived to capture the maximum amount of relevant information with minimal fuss and in the spirit of a casual and friendly dialogue. The questions are intended to capture any area-based variation of the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and also situate their difficulties, if any, of voting and political participation within the broader context of daily living. We encourage you to enthusiastically and answer all questions fully. Please take your time and remember that there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers – whatever you wish to say will all be equally valid for us. Your answers will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential and used for scientific research purposes only. There is no political or ideological preference in this research. Respondents need to be old enough to vote, over 18 years of age. We thank you for your cooperation and would be happy, if you so wish, to share a copy of the results of this research with you after it is completed.

#### Questions

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 1.1. Do you vote/ did you vote in the last election or any election?  | Yes/No       |
| 1.2. How many times have you voted so far?  | Exact/Approx |
| 1.3. What is your age?  | Exact/Approx |
| 2.1. What are the six biggest difficulties you face in daily life?  | Probe        |
| 2.2. Which three are the worst among those difficulties? Why?   | Probe        |
| 3.1. What, if any, are some of the difficulties in <i>your</i> area that trouble your right to vote and/or participate in politics? | Probe        |
| 3.2. What do you think are some of the specific causes behind those difficulties in your area?                                      | Probe        |
| 4.1. Anything further you wish to add?  |              |

#### Demographics/miscellaneous information

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex (don't ask!):

M/F

Disability status:

Disabled:

Y/N

Family member of Disabled:

Y/N

(If family) Dependent on/independent of disabled person:

Close friend/relative/neighbour of disabled person:

What disability:

*Mayub* or *Malul* (accidental or congenital/from birth?):

Interviewer:

Your credentials; how long was the interview?

Thank You!

(N.B.: For any clarifications/ questions, contact Shabnam Mallick at UNDP, shabnam.mallick@undp.org)

## Appendix 2

### Inclusion of marginalized groups survey database

Figure 1: Click on the icon below to open database.



Microsoft Excel Chart

## Appendix 3

### Action-oriented case studies for inclusive governance for disadvantaged groups

(UNDP, Regional Centre in Bangkok): *inclusive governance and disability, UNDP Afghanistan*

#### Statement of the problem

Disability and extreme poverty are thought to be interdependent in Afghanistan, resulting from ignorance, low expectations and prejudice. *Capacity-building* of Disabled People's Organizations in Kabul and surrounding districts is an important priority in a country such as Afghanistan where it is estimated that there are more than one million disabled persons living in abysmal conditions.<sup>4</sup> However, the question of what form this capacity-building should take, especially with regard to encouraging participation in elections. This is a germane question as poverty, ignorance, low expectations and prejudice may be the lowest common denominators uniting victims of discriminations but their overall experience is rarely uniform. Vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms obviously differ in different places and between different people. So do the varied discriminatory practices. The problem is compounded as the government, donors and NGOs, although perhaps in tentative agreement on the aggregate, often differ on the definitions of equality, equity and mainstreaming.<sup>5</sup> Hence, while broad rights-based approaches are fine in principle and in rhetoric, in their actual implementation these approaches become heavily contingent on the local context. Here, then, we have a problem on which there is little agreement on the causes or solutions and where, as usual, the devil is in the details.

#### Background

This study comes at an opportune moment as the Government of Afghanistan and the international community are embarking on a human rights based approach (HRBA) to disability issues in a systematic and concerted manner. The goal of this HRBA is to promote an inclusive, dignified, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabling impairment in Afghanistan. Accordingly, disabled Afghans are entitled to benefit from the full range of civil and political, and socio-economic and cultural rights embodied in the Afghan Constitution and international human rights instruments.

National policy strives to create a barrier-free society for all based on the principles of participation, integration and the equalization of opportunities, as defined by the United Nations in their World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons; the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons; The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region and the on going elaboration for

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<sup>4</sup> Action on Disability and Development (2005). "Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Programme: Report on Assessment and Definition of Capability Development Strategies," UNDP March/April 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Wakefield, S. and B. Bauer (2005). "A Place at the Table: Afghan Women, Men and Decision-Making Authority," *AREU Briefing Paper*, August 2005.

the International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights of Disabled Persons. In doing so, the government of Afghanistan gives priority to enable disabled people to take charge of their lives by removing barriers which deter them from full participation in society.

The disabled person is recognized in national policy, as well as a member of society and therefore deals with all aspects of his or her life (MMD 2003). Some key areas have been identified which need special attention based on the perceived needs and priorities of disabled Afghans. These include supporting disabled persons' organizations, especially disabled women's groups; raising awareness to educate and change public attitudes towards disabled persons; prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation, including health care and therapeutic aids; the development of guidelines for accessible environment and facilities, including access to information; education for all; accessible vocational training programmes and facilities; and an affirmative action plan to ensure that disabled persons have equal employment opportunities, including sheltered employment. Furthermore, the inclusion of disabled persons into society requires physical and programmatic access to cultural and recreational activities, including sports, as well as access to social welfare, accessible housing and public transport. Training will be given to personnel involved in the planning and provision of services for disabled persons. The Afghan government, in coordination with the National Disability Commission (NDC), will take the lead role in collecting and disseminating information, as well as conducting research into the needs of disabled persons.

The MMD<sup>6</sup> will take the lead role for the coordination of implementing national programmes as part of the Comprehensive National Policy on Disability. Designated ministries have been assigned special roles and responsibilities to implement the national policy. The MMD and related government agencies will work closely with national and international organizations, including disability organizations, to realize this policy. The MMD and NDC will collaborate with other agencies, particularly disabled person's organizations, in order to monitor its implementation.

It is clear that little explicit and concerted attention has been paid to the question of participation and representation of disabled persons in the country's governance, and that their empowerment has been inadequately researched and operationalized.

## Objectives

- Demographic focus: disabled women
- Thematic focus: participation and representation

Premised on the aphorism that, after all, "all politics is local," we wish to study gender-based and disability-based discrimination as locally mediated socio-political phenomena. Here, geography matters as much as individual experience. This is because abstract social processes such as social stratification, local governance and ideological hegemony are revealed to us 'on the ground'. Hence, a spatially-oriented approach is of

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<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) has now been merged with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and is now known as the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). As the survey straddles the period before and after the merger of these two ministries, both the old and new entities are cited in this case study.

ontological utility to help understand the real geographical ground upon which the process of development meets with contrary forces of discrimination and exclusion.<sup>7</sup>

Sure enough, it is often claimed that the status of disadvantages and forms of discrimination is different in Kabul than what it is in Kandahar or Herat, and different in the north-west from what it is in the south-east. There are also, supposedly, rural-urban variations, urban-urban variations, and rural-rural variations, etc. It is also generally acknowledged that society's treatment of disabled people is not uniform (e.g. *mayub* or congenital impairments by and large receive less sympathy than accidental or *malul* ones). Likewise, there is no consistent expectation of society among disabled persons (e.g. some disabled people have very low expectations with regard to assistance while others have unrealistically high notions).<sup>8</sup>

But the exact dynamics of this variation, the micro-macro links, have not been systematically studied. We hypothesize that unpacking the strands of gender and disability-based discrimination, in terms of a regional and experiential variation, will lead to important clues of culturally-embedded, spatially-mediated elements of permissiveness and denial, inclusion and exclusion systems, etc. This might lead to further clues for social change and other analytical insights useful for the implementation of an inclusive governance programme.

- *We propose a comparative analysis of the experiential and regional variations in discriminatory practices in Afghanistan.* The study will be situated at the intersection of gender and disability. The rationale for the choice of the disadvantaged group – disabled women – is informed by the fact that they are a subset of the disadvantaged population who are doubly victimized, first because of their gender and then because of their impairment. But since gender is not *only* about women, the study will consider gender and disability-based discrimination and focus on disabled women, but will also include men as well. Therefore, through case studies including but not limited to disabled women's experiences in the electoral processes in the recent past in Afghanistan, we propose to tease out analytically significant pointers to participatory and representational obstacles, and thus deduce how to prevent social exclusion and encourage inclusive democratic development.
- Moreover, we propose to explore the overlaps between representation/participation and justice issues. Because representation and participation of disadvantaged populations in the electoral processes is also a function of their standing in local public/political spaces and forums. Hence, we propose to focus on variable obstacles to participation and access to customary and informal justice systems for the disabled and otherwise especially marginalized and disadvantaged women in local forums like *jirgas* and *shuras*.

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<sup>7</sup> For a spatial framework of analysing social action, see: Routledge, P. (1993). *Terrains of Resistance: Non-violent Social Movements and the Contestation of Place in India*, Praeger.

<sup>8</sup> Action on Disability and Development (2005), op.cit.

## Relevance and linkages

- Linkages are envisaged to the new 3-year policy framework and action plan due to be approved by the Cabinet by Jan 2006 and also the Justice programme 'Justice in the Community'.
- Lessons learnt from this study will reinforce nationally obtained lessons already embedded in the National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD) to ensure it feeds into policy and programming.
- The findings of this study will try to further the advisory capacity of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the nodal body mandated with providing suggestions and corrective measures at every level of governance to enhance human rights, on the basis of existing international human rights principles and standards.
- It is hoped that this study will be timely and relevant to the ongoing democratic transition and associated general elections in Afghanistan, and that it will be in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals review currently under way in Afghanistan.
- The study will also be timely as it coincides with the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) review.

## Methodology

We hope to draw from ethics and justice theories, exchange and incentives, social anthropology and identities, and securitization/desecuritization, utilizing a participatory, mixed-methods<sup>9</sup> (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; desk review; surveys; semi-structured and focus group interviews; and workshops) human rights based approach.

The study will be based on the methodological and procedural approaches formulated in *UNDP Guidelines for Participatory Consultations on Access to Justice* (June 2003) and *UNDP Programming for Justice: Access for All: A Practitioner's Guide to a Human Rights-Based Approach to Access to Justice* (2005), in addition to substantive areas.

We propose to partner with disability and women-specific NGOs active in existing areas of UNDP programmatic work and good contacts with disabled people's organisations and regional personnel – in areas such as Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Kabul. This study proposes to involve stakeholders from the research partners identified below, comprising government, non-governmental and donor agency personnel and disabled persons from the captive sample of programmatic target population and beneficiaries.

Following an exhaustive, participatory situation analysis of the geographic regions involving social profiling, community mapping and interviewing, it is expected that we will be able to arrange four focus group interviews, four in-depth consultations, (one for each region) and a consolidated survey. The sample size and composition of the survey sample will be determined and a survey questionnaire prepared and pilot tested as the research progresses.

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<sup>9</sup> For an overview of the mixed methods approach, see Barron, P. *et al* (2003). "Do Participatory Development Projects Help Villagers Manage Local Conflicts? A Mixed Methods Approach to Assessing the Kecamatan Development Project, Indonesia," World Bank.

## Risks, constraints and limitations

- It would be prudent to mention at the outset that scarcity of reliable data and all information on the disabled in Afghanistan is to be a major hurdle. National statistical and survey capacities have been seriously eroded through decades of war. Many areas of the country are still inaccessible to any kind of basic or applied research and security outside Kabul remains a major concern as the elections approach. But the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. Disabled people in Afghanistan are indeed both numerous and desperate.
- There are significant challenges in access to community groups including security issues, lack of trust, pitfalls of elite capture, capacity and willingness of respondents to participate, etc. It is therefore proposed that we partner with disability and women-specific NGOs to the maximum extent possible and link the study to existing areas of programmatic work and good contacts with disabled people's organizations and regional personnel in areas like Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Kabul.

In that light, this research will make no presumptions on the representativeness of its findings. While this research will attempt to collect qualitative and quantitative information from all available sources, it is important to bear in mind that the project is designed as an *exploratory* study and that it will compensate the lack of statistical data and information with 'thick' descriptions, richness of observations, depth of analyses and the rigors of peer review. To that extent, it is hoped the findings of this study will be formative, exhaustive, reliable and valid, and provide points of departure, or "springboard", for more extensive studies in future.

## Research partners

- The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB)

The JEMB was created to enhance the effectiveness of the activities of United Nations' Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Interim Afghan Electoral Commission (IAEC), as well as strengthen the mechanism for overseeing the conduct of voter registration for the 2004 general elections. The JEMB is an independent legal/administrative body tasked with the issuing and publishing regulations, procedures, instructions, notifications and guidelines for the registration process, and has full responsibility for preparing, managing, convening and overseeing the elections.

- The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD)

The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) is currently the principal government agency responsible for disability coordination, advocacy and information dissemination in Afghanistan. It is structured to develop and deliver a comprehensive package of services to disabled persons to enhance their participation in economic life. MMD is heavily involved in the development of a national disability policy and strategy so that the needs of disabled people are better served and their rights are ensured.

- The National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD)

- The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)
- The National Solidarity Programme (NSP)
- The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)

The National Programme for Action on Disability works in formal agreement with two line ministries, namely the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA). The primary objective of NPAD is to raise awareness and capacity and to develop government structures for policy development, implementation and coordination of disability-focused efforts in Afghanistan. The emphasis of the Programme is to ensure the rightful inclusion of disabled people by addressing and breaking down the social, political and economic barriers faced by disabled people in Afghanistan. NPAD will be a key research partner for this study. The hope is not only to utilize NPAD's comparative strengths and expertise in the disability sector to inform this study but also to appropriately leverage the Programme's close working relationships with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and a resource network of NGOs, CBOs, PVOs and independent experts.

**MRRD:** MRRD is the key ministry responsible for rural poverty reduction through developing, financing and executing an equitable and effective social policy in Afghanistan

**NSP:** The NSP was established by the (Transitional) Government of Afghanistan to assist communities throughout the country in their efforts to strengthen local structures in order to improve access to social and productive infrastructures. The work of the NSP is based on the core values of participatory planning, community contributions and transparency,

**AIHRC:** The Independent Human Rights Commission was established to promote and protect human rights in Afghanistan and investigate human rights violations and abuses, as well as to develop a national curriculum on human rights, and provide suggestions and corrective measures for the betterment of human rights in the country based on the international human rights principles and standards.

- Non-governmental organizations

Non-governmental, community-based disabled peoples' organizations, or DPOs, are in the frontline of all activities related to persons with disabilities. Work will be conducted in partnership with organizations such as the National Association of Disabled Women in Afghanistan (NADWA), one of a number of organizations that have high representation of women and which is particularly active in issues in the intersection of women and disabilities and the Disabled Shura of Afghanistan (DSA).

## Appendix 4

### Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP) programming document extract

#### Background and programme strategy

The Constitution of Afghanistan established a firm basis for subnational governance and the government has embarked on the crucial process of developing the policy, legal and regulatory framework, reforming institutions and ensuring that post-conflict local governance can work in the field. Afghanistan has opted for a prudent approach towards further empowerment of the local communities, building on stronger central government and enhanced performance of the local administration with some degree of deconcentration to the administrations at the provincial and, to a lesser extent, district level. In addition, municipalities have been provided some (limited) fiscal autonomy.

Within this framework and acknowledging that 'while the process of political defragmentation proceeds and the government moves towards a state of normalcy, threats to the legal hegemony of the state persist', the Afghanistan National Development Strategy emphasizes that:

*'The legacy of weak public service delivery makes it essential... to strengthen institutions responsible for delivery of key public services; without this, we will fail to achieve our national development goals' (ANDS; p. 82)*

Success in the reform of the entire public sector, at the national and subnational is considered by the Government of Afghanistan as essential to all other national programmes. It is also stressed that 'lasting peace and prosperity in Afghanistan require structures of governance that are accountable, transparent, effective and Islamic (ibid; p. 83). The Government of Afghanistan 'will give priority to the coordinated establishment in each province of functional institutions, including civil administration, police, prisons and judiciary. These institutions will have appropriate legal frameworks and appointment procedures, trained staff, and adequate remuneration, infrastructure and auditing capacity (the Afghanistan Compact, p.3).

As stressed in the UNDP Country Programme Action Plan 2006-2008, the capacity to plan, manage and implement activities, both at national and subnational levels is essential for the achievement of Afghanistan's development objectives. The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) also reiterates the need to foster better governance as a prerequisite for sustainable human development and fight against poverty.

The Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP) will play a key role in developing capacity and systems to ensure effective implementation of the governance strategies outlined in the Afghan National Development Strategy and donor compact addressing the challenges identified for subnational governance. To address the

challenges outlined in the previous section, the programme has the following major (interrelated) components:

- i. Support will be provided to central government agencies responsible for formulating and implementing local governance policy and developing legal and regulatory framework. This support will consist of assistance to develop the institutional framework and organizational capacity as well as technical support for the development and fine-tuning of the policy, legal and regulatory framework for local governance.
- ii. Support capacity development for subnational governance change processes in line with the policy and legal framework. This involves a concerted effort aimed at 'making local governance work' through continuous coaching/mentoring of local administrators and elected representatives, as well as facilitating participatory local governance processes. As part of this component, UNDP will continue to support strategic elements related to the training of civil servants in local administrations. It also includes a large-scale civic education campaign to enhance participation of Afghan citizens in governance projects.
- iii. A pilot programme for selected provincial and municipal governments in which the nationwide capacity development effort will be complemented by a funding modality for local governments allowing hands-on experiences in the planning, financing and management of select local development processes.
- iv. Support for the development of a network/association of provincial councils to strengthen knowledge-sharing and the avenues for interaction with legislators and to contribute to nation-building by bringing the centre and provinces closer together.

The ASGP will be the core pillar of the UNDP integrated approach for support to local governance. Some of the key principles underpinning the ASGP are:

- A number of other programmes will contribute towards the same outcome and the ASGP has important linkages to a number of other programmes.
- The ASGP will assist in the development of a national framework to support local governance and the implementation in 20 provinces at the beginning of the programme and expand it to cover the entire country within three years, as conditions in the individual provinces allows. In addition, the programme will provide more intensive support to a limited number of pilot provinces (2-3 provinces) to be covered by component iii).
- The support for the functioning of local governance at the provincial level and below (component ii and iii) is geared towards pilot-testing the policy/legal/regulatory framework in the development phase and as lessons are learned; this will provide inputs to further refine the national framework for local governance. Regular evaluations will need to be carried out and the lessons learned should provide grounds for the fine-tuning of policies and implementation strategies.

## Towards Inclusive Governance

- The overall selection of provinces to be covered by the programme (and local governments covered within them) will be guided by criteria related to poverty and capacity development needs. The selection of provinces and local governments for the intensive piloting will be based on commitment to improve governance, in particular participation and transparency.

## Appendix 5

### Afghan Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CISEP) programming document extract

#### Background and programme strategy

This strategy recognizes that a vibrant and vigorous democracy will only take root in Afghanistan if it is sustained by an empowered citizenry, as well as strong and responsive governance institutions. The civil society sector in Afghanistan is young and relatively inexperienced. Many CSOs are still trying to understand/find their role in the new political landscape. The overall goal of the programme is a strong and vibrant civil society sector which can actively participate in national policy formulation and oversight processes. Specifically, it aims at supporting the active engagement of civil society in the further development and implementation of the ANDS and local governance processes. This will be achieved through a series of activities designed to build the capacity and promote an enabling environment for a wide range of civil society organizations at the national, regional and local level in a broad spectrum of development and governance processes. A key initial step will be to convene meeting(s) with donors to get an up-to-date overview of key bilateral donors and development NGOs present and planned support priorities to the Afghan civil society sector. These meetings will allow UNDP to exchange information on planned activities and confirm opportunities for collaboration on common areas of interest and avoid duplication of effort. Several of the components of the strategy envisage working with and through Afghan CSO umbrella organizations, e.g. ACSF, ACBAR, Afghan Women's Network (AWN) Action for Civil Society in Afghanistan (ACA) and Civil Society ANDS (CSANDS). An assessment of the absorptive capacity of umbrella organizations will be an integral part of the process of identifying the capacity of relevant Afghan partners to implement this programme. Another important criterion in identifying partners will be the extent to which umbrella organizations can identify/reach CSOs at the subnational level with the potential of making a contribution to development at local level. As most elements of these programme activities will cut across and reinforce other UNDP Afghanistan governance programmes, the civil society empowerment programme will liaise closely with the ACT Programme (Accountability, Integrity and Transparency in Afghanistan), the Afghan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP), the Access to Information and ICT for Development programme, the Justice and Human rights Programme and the Capacity Development Facility.

#### *At the national level*

The strategy has two interrelated and mutually reinforcing components.

The first focuses on enhancing the capacity and increasing the transparency of CSOs whilst promoting greater collaboration across the sector. The aim is to:

- Promote improved internal governance processes/structures within the CSO sector. Lack of CSO accountability in Afghanistan places a large barrier between them and the government. There is a need for greater self-regulation across the

sector. A study undertaken by the Institute of Development Studies (United Kingdom) concluded that an organization's internal governance and its specific relation to the state are the most important factors in achieving policy influence. The NGO's code of conduct goes some way to addressing governance concerns among the relatively small groups of CSOs registered with the Ministry of Economy. There is now an urgent need for the rest of the sector to adopt these principles and put in place basic governance structures within their organizations. Such structures would include, among others, elected boards, the production of annual accounts/reports, and identification of 'conflict of interest' areas.

- Promote greater cooperation/collaboration across the sector. Up-to-date information on CSO activities and the geographic focus of their work will facilitate this process. This information will also be an important resource for government and donors. Seminars and workshops will be arranged to raise awareness of issues of common concern such as access to information/right to information/improved CSO governance.

The second strand of the strategy is directed towards supporting effective participation by CSOs in policy formulation. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of selected civil society umbrella organisations/CSOs to engage actively with government and other development actors in policy formulation processes and to exercise an oversight function. Particular emphasis will be placed on improving CSOs capacity for evidence – based action research to inform effective advocacy, relating to/working with the media, budget tracking, outcome mapping and impact assessment. Priority will also be given to improving presentational skills. Close links are envisaged with UNDP's PACTA programme. Hence part of the strategy is to support an enabling political environment for civil society at the national level through interaction and support to the respective ministries (MOE/MOJ/MRRD) responsible for CSO registration and oversight of their activities. The strategy will also facilitate systematic engagement on ANDS policies between CSOs, government as well as other key stakeholders.

### *At the sub-national level*

The strategy has the following five core elements.

- Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations working at local levels.

In close liaison with UNDP's Capacity Development Support Facility and working with civil society regional resource centres and umbrella organisations, the focus will be on developing the skills and ability of a wide range of CSOs to play an informed role and to interact effectively with provincial and district and village governance bodies on a range of development issues. Particular attention will be given to new CSOs that would like to contribute to development in Afghanistan. Emphasis will be placed on three main areas:

- (i) Developing CSOs' understanding of development in general and the ANDS in particular. It is envisaged that this will be done through a combination of focused thematic workshops, joint stakeholder meetings and a small grants facility to implement development projects in line with the ANDS priorities. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the different impact of activities on women and men, and in making provision for special budget allocations, measurable steps, accountability systems and the identification of focal points for implementation support to ensure that women's participation is equitable.

- (ii) Supporting the development of a range of skills within CSOs to enable their staff to engage more effectively with government bodies and have better outreach to poorer groups in local communities. It is important to note that there is relatively limited understanding within the civil society sector of their capacity development needs. A notable exception is the need to improve their ability to raise funds. Particular attention will be given to improving CSOs' understanding of the need for legitimate constituencies as well as participatory approaches to development.
  - (iii) Strengthening CSOs internal governance structures. Activities will include regional consultations to discuss self-regulation of the sector and the adoption of voluntary code of conduct. Workshops/ training will be held on a range of issues including registration, elected boards, maintaining financial records/ staff recruitment procedures etc., specific development themes, training needs assessments, training programmes, support in developing codes of conduct, creation of civil society workspace on UNDP Afghanistan website.
- Enhancing opportunities for poorer groups in local communities to participate in local decision making processes.

Ensuring that the interests and views of poorer and more marginalised groups are not overlooked is an integral part of democratic governance processes. In order to be able to communicate and negotiate with other citizens and influence decisions that directly affect them, poor people need to have the confidence that comes from improved understanding and increased knowledge. The Civil Society Empowerment programme will aim to support civic education initiatives which provide opportunities for poorer people to form opinions, express themselves, revise their opinions on the basis of new information and work together with like-minded people to have their voices heard in governance and development processes. It will draw on the expertise/explore possible collaboration with other actors working on-going national and regional civic education initiatives, e.g., ACSF, the Afghanistan Electoral Commission. It will be important to assess the extent to which poor peoples are currently participating in civic education initiatives and also the extent to which the shuras and CDCs can play a greater role in this area. CDC experiences with the empowerment of women in sectors such as health, education will be further assessed with a view to taking account of lessons throughout the subnational governance and civil society empowerment program. Shuras are highly respected within communities and have the potential to be a strong 'force' for civil society development with Afghanistan. Close cooperation is envisaged with UNDP's Sub National governance programme.

- Developing the enabling environment for civil society at local level

The strategy will foster improved understanding of the role of, and interaction with, civil society by provincial, district and village authorities. It will identify officials in each of the key government agencies, including the provincial councils, who have the potential to be 'drivers of change' within their organizations and who are prepared to advocate for increased interaction with civil society on development issues. Special attention will be paid to identifying female "drivers of change" and develop their leadership skills. Activities will include (i) working with the sub-national governance programme (ASGP) to carry out an analysis of institutional and structural factors influencing change within governance bodies. (ii) Convening roundtables with government representatives to

strengthen their understanding of the role of civil society organizations and how local government can work with civil society to enhance the impact and outreach of the ANDS at local level (ii) convening regular meetings/seminars between government and other stakeholders, including CSOs, on specific aspects of the ANDS.

- Improving access to information

Improving access to credible and relevant information for civil society and government officials at national, regional and local levels will be a crucial underpinning of UNDP Afghanistan's governance work. For this reason, a separate Access to Information and E governance programme has been developed which has a number of core components including: strengthening the enabling, policy, regulatory and institutional environment for Access to Information, media and ICT; developing regional information and communication strategies to support the implementation of the ANDS and the achievement of the MDGs; enhancing the professional standards of national and provincial media, building their skills to develop programmes on development matters and to exercise a watchdog function in relations to the ANDS; extending community radio and promoting awareness of peoples' right to information, enhancing their ability to make requests to government and government's ability to make information available. Specific outputs related to these components are set out in the Access to Information and E Governance programme.

- Promoting greater cooperation and increased networking across the civic sector at provincial and district levels.

In many provinces there is a very limited relationship between organizations registered as CSOs and those as NGOs. The former comprises a range of social and cultural organizations, including political parties which to date has relatively little support from the international community. The latter is made up of organizations working mostly on humanitarian and reconstruction projects, often in partnership with international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral donors. A number of the NGO umbrella organizations have active members that cooperate with them at provincial levels but these are reported as weak and under-resourced. Their outreach to and interaction with CSOs, in the provinces is also mixed. The strategy aims to promote greater interaction and increased networking between the two CS groups so that they can have a more collaborative approach in their engagement with government officials and donors on key issues related to the implementation of the ANDS. Activities will include strengthening civil society forums at sub national levels and supporting workshops/seminars which bring together representatives from CSOs and NGOs on key development and governance issues.

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