

The Struggle after Combat

The Role of NGOs
in DDR Processes:
Afghanistan
Case Study

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Cordaid



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Disclaimer

This study was commissioned by Cordaid and executed by five researchers. The views and analysis put forward in this report are entirely those of the authors in their private or professional capacity and should not be attributed to Cordaid, the involved research institutions or any agencies or persons interviewed during this study.

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1 Introduction

This document is part of a broader study that focuses on the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) processes. The study consists of three case studies - Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone - and a synthesis report. This report covers the Afghanistan case study.

Aims

The study was commissioned by the Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid), a Dutch multi-mandate NGO, and is intended to assist the organisation in developing its views and policies in relation to DDR by discussing the conceptual underpinnings of DDR and the role of NGOs - Cordaid's partners in particular - in DDR processes in the field. More broadly, the study aims to inform a wider audience of academics, policymakers and practitioners about the activities, strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in DDR processes. More specifically, it aims to examine how NGOs can complement parties that normally play a leading role in DDR programmes such as the military and United Nations (UN) agencies. Apart from ex-combatants in general, the study was also to look into special groups such as female combatants and child soldiers.

Selection of the case of Afghanistan

The case of Afghanistan was selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, with the formal DDR process completed in 2006, it was possible to investigate the results and the type of experience gained. Interestingly enough, for some observers and parties involved, DDR was a huge success, while for others the process was totally flawed. Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, permanent representative of Japan to the UN, for example, stated that “Japan is committed to promoting, after a successful handling of DDR, the next step in assisting SSR – namely the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). In contrast, Giustozzi and Rossi conclude that “DDR represented much more than a hope in the eyes of many Afghans, and its failure to even get close to expectations is likely to have cost the international community much credibility among Afghans” (Giustozzi and Rossi 2006). This divergence in views necessitates a comprehensive study and a careful weighing of the different arguments, taking into account the specific local conditions and the views of those involved.

Secondly, DDR in Afghanistan was part of a large, multi-donor reconstruction initiative. Available evidence, however, did not point to a major role by NGOs and this consequently warranted further study.

Thirdly, Afghanistan has more recently embarked on a non-voluntary DD programme, the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG). This programme is of interest, as it deals with illegal warlords and militias that comprised and continue to comprise a crucial aspect of Afghanistan's political landscape, and the success or otherwise of DIAG may be of considerable influence on the country's political future and security.

A fourth reason is the continued fighting in parts of Afghanistan's territory. This raises the question to what extent it is possible to engage in DDR and reintegration processes while violent confrontations between belligerent armed actors continue, and whether armed actors can engage in DDR in the absence of an inclusive peace accord that binds all major parties.

Fifthly, Afghanistan is of interest, as it is at the centre of public and political debate on post-conflict reconstruction both globally and in the Netherlands. The latter country's contribution to the United

Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Uruzgan adds to the political relevance of this case in the Netherlands.

Finally, some of the team members of the present study have carried out earlier studies for Cordaid and other principals in Afghanistan, providing relevant knowledge and experience.

Conceptual note

In this study we distinguish between DDR programmes and DDR processes. The former relate to planned, formalised programmes executed by the government or multilateral organisations; the latter refer to a wider societal process that also includes self-demobilisation and self-integration, sometimes also called spontaneous demobilisation and reintegration, and other, largely non-formal ways outside national or international programmes in which ex-combatants try to take up civilian life again. The distinction is important, as NGOs may contribute wittingly or unwittingly to both types of DDR. Another relevant distinction is that between international and local or domestic NGOs. When we specifically refer to the first group we speak of international NGOs (abbreviated to INGOs), while the latter are simply referred to as local or domestic NGOs. When we refer to both groups as a whole or to NGOs in general we use the abbreviation NGOs.

Methodology

The analysis presented here is based on a literature review and empirical fieldwork in Afghanistan. The latter included a three-month stay by Geert Gompelman, who carried out in-depth fieldwork in Mazar-e Sharif and Herat, and shorter visits by Georg Frerks, Bart Klem and Stefan van Laar to Kabul, together with Geert Gompelman. Stefan van Laar also paid a short visit to Kandahar and was able to conduct some interviews there, despite security restrictions. Due to security reasons, however, it was not possible to do fieldwork in the southern part of Afghanistan, though the situation here was covered as a topic in the interviews held in Kabul and elsewhere. In total, the team devoted over 18 weeks to fieldwork in Afghanistan and conducted a total of 122 individual interviews and/or group discussions. These interviews were held with a wide variety of respondents representing several communities, ex-combatants as well as other community members, state officials, academics, multilateral organisations and different kinds of international and local NGOs.

In this research, we made special efforts to interview ex-combatants themselves. We talked to forty ex-combatants on issues ranging from the reasons why they joined armed groups, their experiences with and opinions on DDR, their interaction with communities, and their present situation, to possible reasons to take up arms again. The bulk of these interviews (34) took place in Mazar-e Sharif, three were held in Herat and three in Kandahar. The data are therefore biased towards the northern region of Afghanistan, Mazar-e Sharif and its surroundings in particular. Balkh province – of which Mazar-e Sharif is the capital – is under the firm control of former Jamiat-e Islami (Islamic Society) commander and now governor Ostad Muhammad Ata. Because this man has such a strong grip on Balkh province and no longer has competition from his former adversaries Rachid Dostum and his Jombish-e Melli (National Movement) and Muaqiq of the Hezb-e Wahdat (Unity Party), Balkh province is now regarded the safest province of Afghanistan. The enhanced security and decrease in inter-warlord competition makes Balkh province totally different from, for example, Kandahar, which is surrounded by *Taliban* and insurgency activities. It also compares favourably with Herat, where former strongman Ismail Khan was promoted away to the position of Minister of Energy and Water, but whose constituents are still in place in the local government. The reader should therefore bear in mind that our data offer an understanding of ex-combatants' life-worlds, perceptions and problems experienced in the past or present, but do not claim to provide a full or representative picture of the experiences of ex-combatants in Afghanistan as a whole. In comparison with the data from the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006),

our data provide a somewhat more critical view, despite the arguably better conditions in the area we covered. We will not reiterate the geographical limitations of our study in the further text so as to avoid repetition.

Methodological constraints of this case study concern the rapid turnover of expatriate, multilateral and NGO personnel and some incidental problems of recall. In rare cases, documents could not be shared as they were confidential. The political nature of the process obviously led to different appreciations and assessments among the respondents. When issues were basically factual we tried to resolve this problem by triangulation, probing and cross-checking, while in other cases we considered the existence of different opinions and perceptions simply a result of the sociological reconstruction of multiple realities by our respondents. There is a certain degree of ambiguity with regard to numbers. Documents sometimes provide different or contradictory numbers. As we had no way of verifying the numbers provided in reports, we had no choice than simply to reproduce them, indicating their source. In cases of doubt, however, we have added our own explicit qualifying observations.

In the design, execution and completion of the study, we benefited from the comments of an external reference group comprised of Henny van der Graaf, Irma Specht (Transition International), Lia van Broekhoven (Cordaid), Kees van den Broek (Cordaid) and Bert van Ruitenbeek (Cordaid).

Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows. The next, second, section provides a background to the DDR process. Based on a brief historical overview, we outline the major problems Afghanistan is facing and that may interfere with the DDR and DIAG programmes. The third section describes the different dimensions of the DDR programme that started in 2003, while the fourth section does the same for the more recent DIAG programme. Section five describes spontaneous processes of demobilisation and reintegration and also highlights some counter-tendencies. The sixth section draws the conclusions from this study.

2 Background¹

History

Afghanistan's history can be characterised as volatile. Throughout its long history Afghanistan has known many invasions and wars. Ewans calls it appropriately a “highway of conquest” between west, central and southern Asia (2002: 10). This history also contributed to Afghanistan's considerable ethnic, linguistic and socio-cultural diversity that often has led to divisions and internecine conflict. There are over twenty major ethnic groups, including the Pashtun, Hazara, Tajik, Uzbek and Kirghiz, but also several religious divisions. Magnus and Naby (2002: 24) distinguish five different major historical periods: the pre-Islamic period (500 BC to 700 AD); the mediaeval and late mediaeval Islamic period (700-1709 AD); the Afghan Empire (1709-1826); the Great Game (European imperial period; 1826-1919) and the independent monarchy (1919-1973).

Though there have clearly been state formations of different kinds in the history of Afghanistan, Ewans (2002:9) observes that the state was never able to establish effective control throughout the countryside and that the Afghans did not develop a strong sense of national unity. He says, “If there has been an overriding feature of their history, it is that it has been a history of conflict – of invasions, battles and sieges, of vendettas, assassinations and massacres, of tribal feuding, dynastic strife and civil war. Rarely have the Afghans allowed themselves, or have allowed others with whom they have come into contact, to lead out their lives in peace” (2002:9).

Recent developments

Box 1 summarises the main political developments in Afghanistan since the fall of the monarchy in 1973. A number of salient features stand out. Firstly, there is generally not just one conflict, but a series of intertwined conflicts going on at the same time. At least the following conflict patterns can be recognised: a) domestic struggles for power and state control; b) tensions around ethnic, religious and regional identities; c) feudalism and political patronage; d) economies of violence and warlordism, especially in relation to drugs; and e) interference by superpowers, regional powers, neighbouring countries and terrorist movements.

Secondly, all regime changes since 1973 have been violent, with arguably one exception, i.e. the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2004 and the various interim arrangements preceding it, though this was backed by an international intervention force.

Thirdly, due to Afghanistan's strategic position, in the age of colonial empire as well as during the cold war, it was subject to foreign interference. The conflicts of the last 35 years had external determinants related to the dynamics of the Cold War in the 1970s and 1980s and to those of the war on terror at present.

¹ In 2006 Georg Frerks, Bart Klem, Stefan van Laar and Marleen van Klingeren carried out a study (*Principles and Pragmatism. Civil-military Action in Afghanistan and Liberia*) for Cordaid. For the historical overview of Afghanistan in the present section, the documentary research done for that study, especially the material on pp. 38-42, has been used as a source (2006:38-42).

Box 1: Political developments in Afghanistan since 1973²

Republican period (1973-1979)

On 17 July 1973 Daoud Khan staged a coup and Afghanistan was declared a republic. Daoud's regime quickly evolved into a one-party state and became highly centralised and repressive. A number of opposition movements emerged, such as the *Hizb-i-Islami* and *Jamiat-i-Islami* set up by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani respectively. Ahmad Shah Massoud opposed the regime from the Panshir valley. A military coup (the Saur Revolution) by Russian-trained young officers killed Daoud, handing over power to a cabinet controlled by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), Afghanistan's communist party.

Soviet invasion and domination (1979-1988)

The PDPA's revolutionary reforms led to a serious disruption of the agrarian production system and of rural life in general, thus provoking resentment among the rural population. Moscow grew worried about these confrontational policies and invaded Afghanistan. International attempts to effectuate a Soviet withdrawal failed and the United States (US) started backing and arming *Mujahideen* fighters operating from Pakistan. Simultaneously, humanitarian aid was provided inside Afghanistan and to refugees in Pakistan and other countries. After complicated talks in Geneva and elsewhere, plans for Soviet withdrawal were agreed to. The Russians left Afghanistan in 1989.

Civil War (1989-1992)

An Afghan interim government was formed in Peshawar. In the period between 1989 and 1992 a civil war erupted between Najibullah's government and the various *Mujahideen* groups. In 1992 *Mujahideen* forces took control of Kabul. Despite this success, the *Mujahideen* remained very much divided, especially when they had to allocate government positions amongst themselves.

Mujahideen rule (1992-1997)

Mujahideen rule was characterised by deep divisions based on ethnic, tribal, regional and religious affiliations. The situation soon escalated with regular fighting between the factions, causing considerable damage and suffering for the inhabitants of Kabul.

Taliban rule (1997-2001)

A new force of religious students (*talib*), led by *mullah* Mohamed Omar and supported by Pakistan, started to mobilise against the *Mujahideen* commanders. The *Taliban*, consisting largely of Pashtuns, occupied Kabul after heavy bombing and fighting, and imposed a drastic version of Islamic practice in the areas under their control. Their reign was characterised by severe human rights violations and discrimination of women. However, they were not able to control the whole of the country and the Northern Alliance, mainly composed of Uzbeks and Tajiks, seized control of the northern provinces several times during 2000 and 2001.

US-led invasion and Afghan Interim Authority and Afghan Transition Authority (2001-2004)

After the bombing of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on 9/11, the US became concerned about the alleged hosting of *Al Qaeda* leader Osama bin Laden by the *Taliban* regime and their support to his network. The global superpower declared a war on terror, sought collaboration with the Northern Alliance and invaded Afghanistan. At a conference held in Bonn in 2001 Afghan representatives agreed on specific steps to be taken and were assured of international support. The deployment of international actors included combat troops of the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the UN-mandated peace mission ISAF, led by the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), development donors, UN agencies, NGOs and private contractors.

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004-present)

² Most data in this section are derived from Ewans (2002).

After a number of interim arrangements, a new constitution was agreed to by the *Loya Jirga*. Hamid Karzai was elected the first president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the first parliamentary elections were held in 2005. Parallel to military operations against the terrorist networks and the *Taliban*, domestic and international efforts continued to focus on rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. There was also an upsurge in activities by international and local NGOs.

Afghans often point out that communism, the *Mujahideen*, the *Taliban*, *Al Qaeda*, and even the present government to some extent, are foreign machinations. Yet there has for a long time been a failure or unwillingness on the part of the international community, including the UN, to engage in peace efforts. Arguably, this has changed in recent years, though there are vehement debates and increasing doubts about the rationale, effectiveness and adequacy of those interventions at present.

Fourthly, the Afghan polity was and is highly fragmented, with state authority weak or virtually absent in large parts of the country. State formation has been problematic in the past and continues to be so at present as well. In fact, several observers maintain that there never has been a functioning nation-state in Afghanistan. The country was created as a buffer state between the British and Russian empires and was ruled by a dynasty that hardly resembled a central government in a modern sense. Attempts to rebuild the Afghan state, therefore, may fail as it is incorrectly assumed that such a state existed before. Apart from a deficient basis to start from, the devastation caused by the war further complicated governance and institutional development. Recently, the setting up of the interim and transitional authority, the holding of the *Loya Jirga*, the various elections and the rebuilding of state bodies were the key ingredients to the re-establishment of due governance. ISAF has provided special assistance to the *Loya Jirga* and an additional 2,000-strong Election Support Force (ESF) was deployed to facilitate the parliamentary and provincial council elections of 2005. Though it is probably too early to conclude that this incipient democratic process has failed to install an effective and trustworthy system of governance and public administration, there are clear signs that it will be at least a longer-term process with many ups and downs.

Whether there is sufficient resilience to cope with this or whether the population will lose its patience after the honeymoon period is over or, worse, whether there will be a relapse into violence, remains to be seen. Yet according to the Asia Foundation's public opinion survey in 2006, the overall public mood was still positive. Respondents quoted as reasons: better security, peace, disarmament and rebuilding, followed by schools for girls and women's rights. Moreover, 84% the population stated that they preferred democracy over other forms of government, while over three-quarters of those interviewed were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the way democracy worked in Afghanistan. However, the main problems facing Afghanistan included unemployment, security, the economy, and also corruption (Asia Foundation 2006 and 2007). Our own interviews showed, in comparison, an increasingly critical trend, though most respondents would still agree that the situation had been much worse in the past.

Fifthly, in parallel to the fragmentation of state authority mentioned above, no monopoly on the use of force has ever resided firmly with the state. ISAF's primary task was to support the Afghan authorities in resuming their position and in the maintenance of security. It had to provide a secure operational environment for the authorities, United Nations staff and other international civilian personnel engaged in reconstruction and humanitarian efforts. ISAF was also to assist the authorities in developing future security structures, in reconstruction efforts and in training future Afghan security forces. At the provincial level, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were formed to help the government extend its authority and carry out its security and reconstruction tasks. The activities of ISAF were mostly focused on government authorities, though they have worked with local civil society and local NGOs on an incidental basis.

Setting up a central authority and a properly functioning security sector proved, however, to be difficult, controversial and contested. There were, and are, a multitude of armies and militias under the control of local leaders, warlords and former *mujahideen*. Often based on local patterns of authority, power

and dominance, these groups operate with varying degrees of local legitimacy and range from a handful of combatants to complete armies comprising several thousands of fighters. Some of these groups originated as organisations for local self-protection, while others are the private armies of warlords or are involved in drugs trade and other criminal activities. Concomitantly, over decades of fighting, Afghanistan has witnessed a proliferation of weaponry and arms, so much so that up even now it is impossible to even guess the scale and the amounts involved. Though there have been assessments and surveys, there are persistent doubts about their reliability. Generally, such surveys are felt to underreport the problem. Compared to these challenges, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) still face serious manpower shortages and have to cope, together with the foreign troops of ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), with armed and violent resistance from units reportedly belonging to the *Taliban* or other opposing armed forces. Moreover, the struggle against the *Taliban* harbours the risk of creating ethnic dissent, as the *Taliban* are mostly linked to the Pashtun, while state agencies, especially in the realm of security, are dominated by ethnic groups (such as Tajiks and Uzbeks) related to the Northern Alliance. In this sense, some observers consider the foreign-aided interventions to reconstruct Afghanistan's institutions to constitute a re-balancing of ethnic power relations at the same time. As will be later explained, the DDR programme analysed in this study was completely focused on ex-combatants from the Northern Alliance.

Sixthly, decades of warfare and state negligence have devastated the country. Afghanistan's human development indicators are among the lowest in the world. Life expectancy is estimated at 43 years, adult literacy at 36% and the proportion of the population below the poverty line at 56% (see Frerks et al. 2006:42). Food security is low and large sectors of the population are vulnerable as they have lost their material and social assets due to the war or displacement. Moreover, women and girls have had a low position in society for centuries, further compounded by the traditional cultural practices and discriminatory policies implemented or reasserted under the *Taliban* regime. Essential physical, agrarian and social infrastructure has been destroyed. The economy is in a shambles and significant portion of it revolves around the cultivation of poppies and the illegal production of and trade in opium. Large tracts of agricultural land are infested with mines and unexploded ordnance.

However, in parallel to the continuing military operations, reconstruction and development programmes have started across the country. As a follow-up to the Tokyo and London donor conferences, multilateral and governmental and non-governmental agencies carry out a multitude of programmes in nearly every imaginable sector, supported by donors from all over the world. A major role is played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Because the challenges are enormous and conditions frequently adverse, the record of results achieved is mixed so far, though remarkable successes have been achieved in a short time in some sectors, for example primary education. However, it recently became clear that a great deal of the funds originally pledged by donors had not yet been allocated and that implementation has fallen behind, while there is also a concern that resources are mainly being invested in security to the detriment of other sectors.

Seventhly, past attempts to deal with the conflict have generally failed due to opportunistic features particular to the Afghan leadership and a lack of domestic preparedness to compromise. Similarly, the present initiatives to restore stability and to bring peace and development are contested or depend on clientelist patterns of cooptation with dubious power-holders. Recent parliamentary elections and government appointments have allegedly elevated persons with links to warlordism, the drugs trade or even the *Taliban* to positions of power. They are referred to as government officials linked to illegal armed groups or GOLIAGs. The government is frequently and vehemently reproached for its inability to avoid this, but on the other hand some observers say that in the Afghan socio-political context, cooptation was the only way for the government to secure at least part of its agenda, as it would otherwise not have survived the opposition of these power brokers.

Nevertheless, over the past few years Afghanistan has undergone some positive changes thanks to foreign aid and the fragile peace attained in the northern and north-western parts of the country. The availability of foreign aid has also led to growth in the number of international and domestic NGOs. In contrast, the southern and south-eastern parts are in a virtual state of overt war, with heavy fighting between the *Taliban* and the Afghan and international forces. This problem is exacerbated by the coalition's repressive anti-drug policies as well as by the alleged re-installment of drug lords by the new regime. US ally Pakistan plays an important role in supporting the *Taliban*. It can be concluded that many of the underlying conflict structures are still in place. State reform, security sector reform, warlordism, the war economy, clientelism and nepotism, service delivery to the people, economic reconstruction and development are all challenges that still lie ahead. Despite the initially positive mood, the population seems gradually to be growing impatient, as the peace dividend is not materialising quickly enough. Nowadays, the government is more frequently criticised for general ineffectiveness and ineptitude, in addition to alleged corruption and nepotism.

Implications for the DDR process

A number of these major issues are of particular relevance to the Afghan DDR processes. First of all, after decades of war large numbers of ex-combatants had to be demobilised and reintegrated following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2004.

A first group of military players was the erstwhile army of Afghanistan that was to be reformed almost completely. However, this process of SSR is outside the scope of this report. The second group comprised the different former *Mujahideen* forces, reassembled in the Northern Alliance that fought the *Taliban*. They were renamed as Afghan Military Forces (AMF) and were to become the main beneficiaries of the DDR programme, which will be described below. Then there were remnants (and new recruits) of the *Taliban* that continue to compound the security situation in Afghanistan after their initial defeat in 2001. Not any programme is available for these fighters, although the Alliance assumes that they can be defeated militarily. In addition, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of smaller militias and gangs under local strongmen and warlords that have been declared illegal. These are supposedly dealt with under the DIAG programme, as will be elaborated below.

The country also has to cater for the over 3.5 million refugees who have returned since the fall of the *Taliban* and lack adequate shelter, social and medical facilities and employment. Apart from the ethnic, social and political make-up of the country, the security situation is still very volatile, with fighting going on in several regions. The government has not achieved complete control of the ex-combatants and armed groups or over the weapons stored or circulating inside the country. Nor is it able to check the influx of fighters and arms from abroad across porous borders. Moreover, a number of armed groups are now still involved in the attractive drugs trade and other criminal activities, whereas there are few viable economic alternatives that could absorb these people. In addition, the government is perceived as relatively weak and faces a legitimacy problem, while there are powerful local power brokers in control of armed groups who cannot readily be bypassed. All these factors probably confounded the design, execution and success of the DDR programmes from the start, while they now probably affect their sustainability. Below we describe how these programmes came into being and how they fared until our fieldwork took place in mid-2007.

3 DDR Programme

Origin and rationale of the DDR programme

Already before the Bonn conference of 5 December 2001, parties involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), recognised the importance of demobilisation as one of the "key programmatic areas prioritised for needs assessment" (Afghanistan 2001:2). A draft sector report of December 2001 stated that demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants could make a considerable contribution to stability and that the pacification of ex-combatant groups would in fact continue to be the most critical activity towards this end. The report argued that Afghanistan had a war-fed political economy with military activities offering employment to many fighters, especially young men who had been pressed into conscription by economic hardship. Reintegration of ex-combatants would not only improve security conditions by reducing the number of fighters and pacifying risk groups, but would also foster the social and economic stabilisation of the country by demonstrating peace dividends (Afghanistan 2001:4-5). However, in outlining the programme principles and approach, the document warned that the conflict in Afghanistan:

"...escapes easy labelling and no blueprint for disarmament exists. The protracted nature of the Afghan conflict has been dominated by the presence of too many warlords and power brokers in the absence of a functional state. This defies the conventional approach to demobilizing, as is often the case in other post-conflict countries" (Afghanistan 2001:8).

The International Crisis Group (ICG) also submitted that the situation in Afghanistan had its own specific characteristics. In September 2003 it published a report highlighting some lessons learned that were of relevance to DDR in Afghanistan. The report described in detail the military structure of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF), as the officially recognised former militias are called. The command structure and hierarchies are based on personal relationships and loyalties between the commanders and their soldiers. Though the troops may not be organised as a permanent structure, they can be mobilised flexibly and rapidly, according to the ICG report. It was therefore essential to map the command structure in each district (2003:4).

The previously mentioned draft sector report asserted that an effective demobilisation programme would have to target young fighters and deserters as well as specific risk groups without any other marketable skills but fighting. The report argued in favour of a voluntary mobilisation programme that would create viable alternative livelihoods, with special attention to female-headed households. This programme would need to be part of an integrated approach and ought to have Afghan ownership and leadership (2001:11-13). The report also outlined a number of reintegration components, organisational arrangements and links with other cross-cutting initiatives (2001:14-24).

Subsequently, the Afghan Interim Authority outlined a security, demobilisation and reintegration framework and future programme, reiterating many of the elements identified in the draft sector report. This included the establishment and training of a new, multi-ethnic, professional army under democratic control and civilian oversight and the simultaneous demobilisation and reintegration of superfluous regular forces and irregular militia combatants. The document identified as a key issue the creation of employment opportunities and the provision of livelihood support, and urged that attention be paid to special groups such as child soldiers and disabled combatants. The document went on to outline an implementation framework, including the terms of reference for Regional Support Units that would operate Information, Registration and Referral Services. The framework stressed the need to link to larger and longer-term reconstruction programmes by partnering with international organisations and NGOs. It also identified some potential labour-intensive projects (Afghan Interim Authority: n.d.).

Finally, the ICG report cited the dominance of Tajiks and earlier *Shura-yi Nazar* members - Massoud's command structure - in the Ministry of Defence (MoD). According to the ICG, this might undermine the credibility of the DDR process in the eyes of other ethnic groups. It expressed some doubts about the selection process and capability of the Regional Verification Committees (RVCs) that checked and approved the lists of soldiers entitled to enter the reintegration programme. It also called attention to shortcomings in disarmament attempts in the north, where the weapons remained in provincial and district depots and were not handed over to the central authorities.

Despite these early efforts and studies, the implementation of major, concrete activities proved to be a slow process. DDR in Afghanistan finally received an impetus at the donor conference held in Tokyo in February 2003, where Japan was appointed the lead country for DDR. UNAMA had also come to recognise the need for a DDR programme.

Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme

DDR was to start effectively with the launching of pilot projects under the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) in October 2003. ANBP was set up to assist and give shape to the overall DDR efforts as foreseen in the Bonn agreement. ANBP was created in April 2003 and was administered and implemented by the UNDP on behalf of the Afghan Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Japan as the lead nation (ANBP 2006a). It worked closely with the Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission established by the Afghan Transitional Authority to bring together the key actors to develop a DDR policy framework. The funds for ANBP - US\$141 million in total – were provided by eight donors: lead nation Japan, which donated the majority of funds, the United Kingdom, Canada, the US, the Netherlands, the European Commission, Norway and Switzerland (ANBP 2006:6). ANBP had a central office in Kabul and worked through eight regional offices that each had one Mobile Disarmament Unit (MDU) with both civilian and military staff. The latter travelled throughout the region to disarm military units and had operational, administrative and security duties. An international observer group with representatives from UNAMA and donors provided impartial oversight (ANBP 2006a).

The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups project, a follow-up to the DDR programme, was formally launched on 11 June 2005. It targets groups that were not under the umbrella of the MoD, criminal groups or GOLIAGs. This project is dealt with in section 4.

In addition to its DDR activities, ANBP engaged in the Anti-Personnel Mines and Ammunition Stockpile Destruction Project starting in 2005. In that year the project destroyed more than 5,000 tons of ammunition, almost 1,200 anti-personnel and 460 anti-tank mines. It further discovered and surveyed 722 ammunition caches with contents corresponding to 20,000 metric tons of ordnance. In addition to increasing the security of the population, this project also helped the Government to meet its stockpile reduction obligations as a State Party to the Ottawa Convention. Heavy Weapons Cantonment was also part of the ANBP programme. This component ended in October 2005 with 12,248 heavy weapons (98%) cantoned and de-activated across the country. Some weapons were transferred to the new ANA (ANBP 2006:7-10).

Disarmament and demobilisation under the ANBP

With regard to DDR, the ANBP aimed at the dismantling and complete removal of the command structures of the AMF, thus paving the way for the new Afghan army. The goals were:

“to break the historic patriarchal chain of command existing between the former commanders and their men; and to provide the demobilised personnel with the ability to become economically independent – the ultimate objective being to reinforce the authority of the government. In this respect, DDR was never mandated to disarm the population per se or to provide direct employment, but to assist AMF military personnel to transition from military into civilian occupations” (ANBP 2006:3).

It is, however, doubtful whether this limited scope of the programme was clear to everyone and to Afghan society at large. Indeed, much criticism revolved around the programme’s failure to create employment and the continuing insecurity, apart from more specific criticisms of the way the programmes were carried out or how certain groups had appropriated benefits on false grounds or through corrupt practices. There were widespread allegations of corruption against governmental agencies involved. Some respondents also wondered why only the northern parts were disarmed and the programme did not cover the Pashtun. This security dilemma left them feeling vulnerable and forced to rely on the new ANA. Others felt that leaving the *Taliban* out was highly risky, if not foolish, as this would continue to compromise peace in Afghanistan. Again other commentators argued that guns were part of the Afghan culture and that the security problems did not reside in the possession of a gun in itself, but in wider contentious issues.

The scope of ANBP gradually expanded and it became a truly national programme from May 2004 onwards. It focused only on AMF members. Over time, 93,000 names were removed from a list of 100,000 AMF personnel, and thus from the payroll of the MoD, resulting in a budget saving of over US\$120 million which could be used for defence reform and the new ANA (ANBP 2006:3). The names of those to be demobilised were based on lists compiled by regional teams of the Ministry of Defence and verified by the RVCs consisting of eight civilians, “highly respected” individuals with strong credentials. The RVCs were also tasked to identify special groups such as drug addicts, child soldiers or those in need of psychological support. Candidates selected by the RVCs were supposed to hand in their weapon at an MDU, where it was registered. The demobilisation package included food, a *shalwar kamiz*, a medal of honour, and a certificate of good conduct. The reinsertion package included some foodstuffs. The disarmament and demobilisation phase was concluded in 2005 and showed the following results:

- 63,380 former AMF officers and soldiers had disarmed and of that number, 62,376 had demobilised (UNDP 2006:7);
- 260 units were decommissioned;
- 57,431 ex-combatants had chosen the reintegration option, 3,619 of whom dropped out during the programme³;
- 57,629 light and medium weapons and 12,248 heavy weapons were collected. 21,780 were handed over to the ANA and Ministry of the Interior;
- dismantlement of the AMF, removal of factions’ war-fighting capacity and risk of major factional clashes;
- creation of conditions for the successful deployment of ANA throughout the country (ANBP 2006:4)
- provision of additional benefits to a further 13,312 ex-combatants (UNDP 2006:4).

Reintegration under the ANBP

Those who opted for the reintegration package received a cash grant, career counselling and support in finding employment or becoming self-employed. The cash payment was later suspended and made part of the integration package in the form of a higher stipend or extra equipment after reports of extortion attempts by regional commanders (ANBP 2006a). In contrast to other countries, the DDR programme in Afghanistan did not include an encampment phase. Most of the target groups were in fact part-time

³ The UNDP final report gives slightly different figures: 55,804 entered the reintegration process and 53,145 completed it.

soldiers maintaining family homes and community ties. The options on offer included: agriculture, vocational training and job placement, small business opportunities, de-mining, teaching, government jobs, wage labour and joining the ANA or the police. Table 1 gives the breakdown of the participants who opted for the reintegration programme.

Table 1: Number and percentage of reintegrated persons by sector

Sector	Number	Percentage
Agricultural	24,069	41.91
Vocational training	11,740	20.44
Small business	14,148	24.63
De-mining	845	1.47
ANA	1,389	2.42
ANP	104	0.17
Contracting team	1,066	1.86
Teacher training	404	0.70
Drop-outs	3,619	6.30
Other	47	0.08
Total	57,431	99.98

(ANBP 2006:6)

The table shows that most demobilised soldiers opted for agriculture, followed by small businesses and vocational training. Together these sectors represent 87% of the total. All other sectors are fairly insignificant. It is striking that only a very small number re-entered the Afghan National Army or the police. The DDR programme was closed in 2006, but UNDP's Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery recommended a follow-up Reintegration Support Project to ensure the sustainability and continued reintegration support to ex-combatants in the medium and long term in order to maximise the achievements of the DDR programme and diminish the risk of future insecurity posed by poorly integrated ex-combatants (UNDP 2006:8).

Commanders Incentive Programme

In view of the close bonds between the commanders and their soldiers and the dependencies involved, a special Commanders Incentive Programme (CIP) was designed to demobilise and reintegrate commanders. The CIP, started in mid-2004, included a financial redundancy package, foreign trips, training, and government positions. Since its inception, it has reintegrated about 320 commanders and 150 Ministry of Defence generals (ANBP 2006:5). The Afghan Institute for Training and Management AITM provided a one-month business management training course to 335 commanders at an average cost of US\$876 per trainee. Apart from business management, the courses included topics such as democracy, human rights, gender, conflict resolution, marketing, English and computer skills (ANBP 2007).

Vulnerable groups

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) established a separate programme for children, but the number of participants was less than 200. Only some of the child soldiers had been real fighters and had

a gun; most had worked as cooks or guards. Some of them functioned as ‘boyfriends’, meaning that they were sexually abused by the commanders and their soldiers. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provided intensive literacy classes to child soldiers, while the World Food Programme (WFP) provided over 150,000 children of ex-combatants with de-worming and food for education assistance programmes. Only four female ex-AMF soldiers entered the reintegration programme. They opted for small business support. However, nearly 25,000 wives or female family members of former soldiers were scheduled to receive educational and income generation opportunities, while another 4,500 were included in WFP projects. There were few disabled participants, probably because this group had demobilised earlier. They were entitled to access to all reintegration packages and were also provided with livestock to supplement their package (ANBP 2006a). In conclusion it can be argued that these NGOs made extra efforts to put children’s and women’s issues on the agenda and to implement programmes to deal with them.

Implementation arrangements

In addition to its ties with the Afghan Government, UNAMA and UNDP, ANBP worked through a number of implementing partners. For the disarmament component, ISAF provided security and the HALO Trust assisted in weapon and ammunition de-activation and/or destruction. Ronco and DynCorp/UXB International were also involved in the Anti-Personnel Mines and Ammunition Stockpile Destruction Project. A large number of partners participated in the reintegration component: the IOM, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the WFP, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF and the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA). The Ministries of Education and Communication provided teacher training and small business support respectively. An additional thirty national and international NGOs were also ANBP implementing partners (ANBP 2006a). As this study is specifically interested in the role of NGOs in the DDR process, below we shall elaborate on the implementing NGOs.

Implementing NGOs

Since the fall of the *Taliban*, Afghanistan has experienced an influx of international development agencies that have become involved in the reconstruction of the country. International NGOs such as CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Cordaid, Oxfam/Novib, Save the Children, Caritas International and others have all started activities in Afghanistan alongside agencies that were already working in the country earlier. In addition to international NGOs setting up operations in Afghanistan, there has also been a proliferation of national NGOs. These are usually technical service providers and implementers working for larger donors such as international NGOs and the UN (Rubin 2006). By the end of 2006 there were 891 national NGOs in Afghanistan and 277 international NGOs, according to the Department of NGOs of the Ministry of Economic Affairs (ACBAR/Equal Access). Only few Afghan NGOs have taken up the watchdog role of civil society towards the state. Examples of these organisations are Afghans for Civil Society (ACS) and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). This has caused some to say that Afghan civil society is weak or even non-existent. Others point to the participation in the *Loya Jirga* and local *shuras* to argue that Afghanistan has a particularly strong civil society. But these *shuras* can also be seen as mechanisms of a patriarchal system, and local interviews indeed confirmed that it is mainly the opinion of the elders that counts in the *shura*. This does not disqualify them as civil society, but it does raise some doubts about their inclusiveness.

Both international and local NGOs have been involved in DDR. Their main involvement has been in the implementation of the reintegration component. The choice for NGOs as implementing partners (IPs) of the reintegration component was not based on the comparative advantages NGOs could have in reintegration, but on a cost-benefit analysis. ANBP had assessed whether it would be more cost-effective

to do the reintegration programme themselves or to outsource it to NGOs. But even including the overhead costs, it was cheaper to contract it out. NGOs were asked by ANBP to prepare a proposal and a budget for reintegration packages within the parameters set by ANBP. These reasons notwithstanding, it is in fact normal practice of UN-led programmes to delegate implementation of sub-programmes to a series of implementing partners. In this sense, practice in Afghanistan seemed to be standard.

A common criticism heard from NGOs was that they were not involved in the actual design of the reintegration programme and had limited room to adjust the programmes on the ground. One NGO representative commented that the UN perceived NGOs as sheer implementers of their programmes or as subcontractors, without taking into account the autonomy of the organisation or its experience working in the area. This led some NGOs to decide not to get involved in DDR. But these were all international NGOs which could well afford such a stance as they had access to other sources of funding. National NGOs had fewer sources of funding and as a result were more eager to implement reintegration programmes for ANBP.

NGO involvement in Disarmament and Demobilisation

NGOs expressed their reluctance to become involved in disarmament and demobilisation as these were seen as military tasks and would compromise the neutrality of the NGO sector. One of Cordaid's partners, the Afghan Women Resource Centre, for example, does not want to interfere in politics, as it is a non-political organisation. Major NGO coordinating agencies such as the Afghan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) are not involved in DDR either. ACBAR's country director said she did not know of a single one of the 94 ACBAR members that had been involved. A further illustration of this can be found in a discussion with two representatives of an international NGO in Mazar-e Sharif in which one of them commented:

“We should not become associated with the military because we need the trust of the communities we work with. Our organisation has been in Afghanistan for a long time, whoever was in Kabul. We need to maintain our neutrality.”

This opinion is shared by most NGOs we spoke with. Compromising the organisation's neutrality and consequently endangering the organisation and its staff by becoming too closely affiliated with military actors is frequently cited as a reason not to get involved in the disarmament and demobilisation components of DDR programmes, something that also transpired from an earlier study on civil-military cooperation in Afghanistan (Frerks et al. 2006:56-60). This stance obviously confounded attempts to realise broader civilian and societal oversight of military issues: now they could easily remain outside the public debate. Nevertheless, another interviewee questioned NGO neutrality by saying:

“I don't think NGOs can ever be neutral. We choose the better side already by implementing the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). We want to make believe we are neutral, but in fact, we are siding with the government. [...] Even though the government is not great, we want the government to win the battle. We need to make up our mind, and to be honest: it is also where the money is.”

In a letter entitled 'Afghanistan: A Call for Security' (dated June 17, 2003) a range of humanitarian, human rights, civil society and conflict prevention organisations called on the international community to accord NATO a robust stabilisation mandate in Afghanistan. This included a call for “a comprehensive approach to security sector reform that includes the demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants serving in militias outside of effective government control”. In this letter NGOs such as Action Aid, CARE, Cordaid, Human Rights Watch, International Rescue Committee (IRC), World Vision, Save the Children and many other organisations themselves called for a DDR programme. Even more, they asked for more government

control and a robust mandate for NATO. In view of these requests, it is hard to classify NGOs in Afghanistan simply as neutral. The signatories were quite consciously taking sides in an ongoing war.

This being the case, it may seem remarkable that, apart from commercial contractors, in fact only one international NGO was involved in disarmament, i.e. Halo Trust. One reason is undoubtedly that not many NGOs have the highly specialised technical and managerial expertise, equipment and logistical facilities to carry out such an activity. The pilot programmes in Kunduz and Paktiya were first started by ANBP without professional personnel with knowledge of weapons and ammunition. A representative of Halo Trust said that “commanders would drive their tanks to the project site and shoot to show that it was still working”. This obviously created dangerous situations and Halo Trust was asked to help with the disarmament component. The role of Halo Trust consisted of collecting and moving the ammunition and weapons, separating the serviceable from the unserviceable, and demolishing the unserviceable weapons and ammunition. Halo Trust also managed the Heavy Weapons Cantonment sites and deactivated the weapons by taking out essential parts such as fuel injection pumps and breech blocks. Usable weapons were refurbished by technical personnel of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and then handed over to the ANA.

Assisting in disarmament had repercussions for Halo Trust as an organisation and for its staff as well. One Halo Trust staff member said that he was threatened in a mosque in Gardez after a funeral with the words: “We will chop your head if we see you again in Gardez”. He also received a letter from *Taliban* commanders saying that he would be killed immediately if they saw him. Halo Trust employees were perceived as spies for foreigners by some. Halo Trust would stress to those who were disarmed in DDR that they were only there as a technical team, checking the weapons and making sure they were safe, and that the political negotiations were done by ANBP. Most ex-combatants and former commanders simply regarded the people from Halo Trust as ‘*kargar*’, Persian for simple workers. Halo Trust also contributed to the reintegration component of DDR by training some 1,000 persons as de-miners. The organisation itself employed around 150 ex-combatants as de-miners, and its experiences were generally good. Halo Trust made a number of arrangements to achieve this. For example, the de-miners had to promise to refrain from political activity and sign a detailed contract. They also had to submit the names of guarantors in their places of origin.

Halo Trust is also involved in DIAG in which it handles the disposal of weapons and ammunition as a technical organisation. It receives instructions from ANBP and not directly from the government, and its staff tries to keep a low profile, as this is a much more controversial process than DDR.

NGO involvement in Reintegration

Reintegration options that were offered by NGOs included nearly all sectors mentioned above in Table 1. They ranged from agriculture, vocational training and job placement to small business opportunities and de-mining. Subcontracting by ANBP involved more than thirty implementing partners (Rossi and Giustozzi 2006:7). JICA, for example, trained 557 ex-combatants in fields such as tailoring, welding, sheet metal work and computer skills.

The following were some of the main implementing partners in the programme (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006):

- The IOM was the major service provider with 26% of ex-combatants; it covered the vocational training/job placement, agriculture and small business options;
- The agriculture option was provided by AFS, CARE, VARA, FAO, ARAA, COOPI and CFA⁴;
- Vocational training/job placement by IOM, BEST, GTZ, JICA, HAFO and World Vision;

4 For the full names of these agencies please refer to the list of abbreviations.

- Small Business by IOM, AGER and BEST;
- De-mining by ATC, DDG, DAFA, AREA and UNMACA;
- Teacher Training by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

The work on DDR was focused almost exclusively on AMF forces from the Northern Alliance and took place in areas that were considered relatively safe. DDR work in Kandahar, however, had to be done under increasingly difficult circumstances. During our visit in mid-2007, the overall atmosphere in the city was tense and the few expatriate staff that used to work in Kandahar had apparently left. The province experienced more anti-government attacks than any other province in Afghanistan. The UN assessed almost the entire province of Kandahar as an extremely risky and hostile environment and programmes had therefore become even less accessible (UN Department of Safety and Security, Afghanistan). A handful of national and international NGOs (with almost exclusively Afghan staff), UNAMA and the specialised UN agencies were still working in the province, in addition to foreign troops and the ANA. Disarming, demobilising and reintegrating ex-fighters right in *Taliban* heartland was predictably not only difficult, but also risky. Even so, ANBP experienced no major difficulties in finding implementing partners willing to get involved in reintegrating former fighters in Kandahar. Among the organisations involved were Islamic Relief (IR), Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan, Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA) and the UNDP. The DDR programme in Kandahar started in April 2004 with roughly one year set aside for disarmament and demobilisation and one year to complete the reintegration component.

Some of the IPs tried to adjust the packages to local economic opportunities. For example, in Herat, which is famous for its traditional blue glass, World Vision International offered glassmaking vocational training to ex-combatants. Most vocational training packages were in the form of apprenticeships, in which the implementing agency would pay a local artisan and provide him with some tools and materials to take one or more ex-combatants into his workshop for anywhere between 3 and 12 months. After this period the payments ended. Several NGOs pointed out that the training was insufficient to teach the beneficiaries the proper skills to compete in the market.

Some NGOs and international organisations such as the IOM offered daily stipends to ex-combatants attending their training courses. But due to bureaucratic hurdles, the UN was slow to release funds to the IPs, and so some organisations were not able to pay the stipends to their beneficiaries. An NGO representative from Kandahar said that:

“Our project with courses in carpentry, plumbing, computer skills and English ran out of money. To motivate the attendants they were given money to be present. First the ex-combatants in the course received US\$9 a day, then 6, then 3 and finally nothing. The result was unmotivated people in class and ex-fighters leaving the course.”

In Mazar-e Sharif and Kandahar, this issue resulted in demonstrations in front of the offices of HAFO. In Kandahar the demonstrators were even armed and security forces were needed to handle the situation. The delays in payment by the UN seriously endangered the organisation concerned and caused a breach in the trust of ex-combatants in DDR.

There was also dissatisfaction with the services delivered by some IPs. A UN worker was very critical of some Afghan IPs, saying that they would buy a “couple of nearly dead sheep and give them to the ex-combatants”, while keeping the profits for themselves. The Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey found that on average 7% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the IPs. The survey reports as follows on the more severe cases:

“The largest dissatisfaction registered was to ARAA. 32% of those who referred to this IP were dissatisfied. The tools and materials that were distributed to ex-combatants like shovels, pickaxes, wheelbarrows, saws and ploughs including animals (sheep/goat) in Herat were poor quality and at a high cost. ANBP realised this

during the SMART monitoring process and actions were taken accordingly. ARAA service was terminated and the remaining ex-combatants to be reintegrated were transferred to IOM to be serviced. Dissatisfaction on AFS is also relatively high where 25% of those referred to this IP expressed their frustration. Ex-combatants stated that they did not receive training relevant to the options chosen and that the quality of distributed livestock was not good. It was realised that AFS did not have the capacity required to provide the services as presented in the contract. ANBP regional staff conducted close monitoring and some improvements were recorded” (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006).

Reintegration is widely considered both an economic and a social process (Colletta 1997; Weinstein and Humphreys 2006; Baare, n.d.). However, in interviews with NGO representatives it became clear that the reintegration component in Afghanistan dealt almost exclusively with economic reintegration. Ex-combatants were provided reinsertion benefits such as clothing, cooking oil, grain and rice and received reintegration packages such as vocational training, agriculture or livestock keeping. In many DDR programmes elsewhere the reinsertion package also includes components such as health checks and the provision of essential information on human rights and women’s rights, HIV/AIDS, civilian behaviour, domestic violence, and so on. Such components were not part of the Afghan DDR programme, though the CIP did pay some attention to such aspects. Nor was attention given to the social dimension of the ex-combatants’ transition from military to civilian life, or to reconciliation with local communities. One notable exception to this overall focus on economic reintegration was the programme offered by Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU). CPAU provided peace education for a total of 32 ex-combatants in the Kalakan district in Kabul province. This programme aimed to teach skills for peaceful co-existence and reconciliation to the ex-combatants. This was part of their reintegration programme, in which they received vocational training in the morning from the German Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte im Bereich der Migration und der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (AGEF). Peace education was provided in the afternoons by CPAU for a period of 6 months. As the programme was successful, it was later expanded with an additional 70 ex-combatants from the Kalakan and Mirbachakot districts. This type of peace training, however, was not included in the reintegration package of any other IP.

Social reintegration of ex-combatants does not seem as much an issue in the Afghan post-conflict constellation as it does in other countries which have experienced DDR. The combatants comprising the AMF had fought on the ‘right’ side against the *Taliban* or had been *mujahideen*. They had been victorious and many of them were considered heroes. Moreover, most of them had been part-time fighters and had stayed at home and within their communities throughout. Some NGO representatives did not agree with this positive assessment, arguing that respondents would not tell the whole truth about these issues for fear of repercussions. They claimed that there had also been misbehaviour by those groups and that a number of commanders still wielded considerable influence. However, of the 40 ex-combatants interviewed for this research, only one reported problems with community acceptance. This was largely confirmed by discussions with communities. Moreover, Afghan respondents were very frank about their aversion for commanders, rendering the argument of fear of repercussions somewhat less convincing.

Perspectives of ex-combatants

It is notoriously difficult to distinguish combatants in violent conflicts, especially those taking place in the global South, from civilians. This is particularly true in Afghanistan, where only a small part of the ex-combatants had served under regular command structures. The combatant/civilian dichotomy does not tally with reality on the ground, where many combatants are actually part-timers. These combatants do not fit the usual stereotype of a professional soldier. The militia members do not look very different from the rest of the population, and just as the population at large, their different backgrounds make for a diverse palette of individuals (Poulligny 2004:7). Though the DDR programme was exclusively targeted at the Afghan Military Forces associated with the MoD, this was still a highly diverse group. These

ex-combatants ranged from former *mujahideen* without any education to officers professionally trained by the Soviet Army. They comprised full-time and part-time soldiers, forced recruits and volunteers who wanted to defend their country.

For a DDR programme to succeed, it is important to understand why people joined armed groups and became part of the conflict. This knowledge can also help prevent them joining armed groups again. The reasons cited most frequently by ex-combatants in this research were that they were defending their *din* (religion), *vatan* (country) and *namoos* (honour). Especially former *mujahideen* pointed to the Soviet invasion and the subsequent need to defend these values as the most important reasons why they joined armed groups. But the younger former *mujahideen* told us there were no other economic opportunities for them than to join the *mujahideen* parties. This is borne out by the fairly low socio-economic and educational status of the ex-combatants. According to the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey, they had the following characteristics:

- In general ex-combatants were young: 60% were 20 to 30 years old;
- More than 80% were married, 70% head of a family of up to 10 members some 40% of whom were under the age of 10;
- 90% were soldiers without any rank;
- 56% of those interviewed were illiterate;
- 22% had from zero to less than five years of other work experience;
- 48% had work experience in agriculture, 15% in small business and the rest in different areas (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006).

This has not changed much in the meantime. Brett and Specht (2004) give a comprehensive overview of why young soldiers choose to fight, including case studies from Afghanistan that suggest a similar combination of determining factors.

According to a publication issued by the Senlis Council (2007:38-41), economic hardship, extreme poverty, structural unemployment and the pressing need for a stable income to feed large families are presently the most important reasons for people to join the insurgency. Other reasons are that people feel treated unfairly, have suffered from government action, or join out of fear of the *Taliban*. The rise in civilian casualties and the lack of jobs and overall economic development are cited as the most pressing local grievances in the same report (2007:64). This combination of inadequate income opportunities, growing disillusionment with the government and increasing frustration with the way international troops operate in Afghanistan form the same perilous mix of factors that caused Afghans to join armed groups in the first place.

Several of the ex-combatants we interviewed had joined the official army during the regimes of Najibullah or Daoud to have a career as a professional soldier. They stated that they had always worked for the official government of Afghanistan and would have liked to continue to work under this government, but were forced to be 'DDR-ed'. As we have seen, only 2.42% of all demobilised soldiers were reintegrated in the new ANA. This was the most frequently articulated criticism of DDR on the part of the professional soldiers. An ex-combatant who now works as a day labourer at the army base at Qalaye Jangi said:

"We, the educated, were DDR-ed alongside the jihadis. Our experience should have been used. We were not shopkeepers but professional soldiers. [...] Sometimes, I ask officers here questions on military subjects but they don't have answers to my questions. They are not capable soldiers."

Another professional soldier, who currently works as a cook in a psychiatric hospital, commented:

"I served in the army for many years and had to stand in this heat with three heavy bags on my shoulders. And

while Alam Khan (a local Jamiat commander) has studied up to the second level in school, he is now in the army and I am a cook. It should be the other way around.”

An ex-combatant in Kandahar said:

“We know that many people who received benefits were not ex-fighters. In the course we tolerated each other, but there were a lot of tensions. But let’s not focus on these tensions. The problem was that the project was not done in a good way. They equalled personalities; we were all alike to them. We were all measured to one gun. What do we have right now? No opportunities and no work. I served my country for 25 years, my two brothers for 20 and 30 years.”

Likewise, another informant from Kandahar said:

“The large majority was not ex-fighter at all. They had received a DDR card for handing in a rusty old weapon.”

These ex-combatants’ argument was that their considerable experience and education in military issues should have been put to use in the present army, while uneducated former *mujahideen* were given positions in the ANA. Even worse, people who had not been fighters at all also received benefits under the programme. It was suggested that many had appeared on the AMF lists by manipulating connections without actually being ex-combatants, just to get access to expected benefits. There were a lot of ‘ghost soldiers’ among the beneficiaries, it was alleged.

In their view, disarming and demobilising the educated professional soldiers alongside the *mujahideen* was also a flaw in the DDR programme. The older ex-soldiers said that they had served the country and should have been given at least a pension and some recognition of their service. Some of the former officers experienced loss of status and prestige after they lost their positions in the army. The following two remarks illustrate this:

“My pride is injured. Because I was an officer in the army people would call me ‘rais’ (president) and some still do. But president of what? President of the unemployed? President of the alley?”

And:

“It is a matter of prestige. Now, we have to do some low ‘donkey’s work’, while before we were officers with pride and respected by the community. We need to work, for example, now as a potato-seller on the street, so our children can go to school.”

A number of ex-combatants had tried to get into the Afghanistan National Army (ANA), but had no money to bribe their way in or no connections that could help them get in. Corruption and nepotism are hurdles for many ex-combatants in finding a job. Almost all ex-combatants brought up the issue of corruption during interviews. Economic opportunities are few in Afghanistan and jobs are often given to friends and family members, or one has to pay a bribe to be hired. Another problem for ex-combatants was that their training was not sufficient for them to compete in the labour market. Most ex-combatants appreciated the training they received as it enabled them to learn something, but the packages offered to them were insufficient to gain a sustainable livelihood.

The Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey by ANBP, based on 5,010 interviews, put the employment rate of ex-combatants at 90% throughout the country in June 2006. According to the survey, the highest employment rate was in small business where 93% of those who had completed reintegration found employment, followed by agriculture with 91%. The vocational training/job placement option appeared to be more difficult with an employment rate of 80%, followed by those who had completed the teacher

training option with 70%, and de-mining, which showed the lowest employment rate of about 68%. It was also noted that 72% of the interviewed ex-combatants had started their own business, mainly in agriculture and self-employment.

With regard to income, the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey found that 15% of ex-combatants interviewed received less than 1,500 Afghani per month (equivalent to about US\$1 per day), which is an improvement compared to 21% in the previous survey; 41% generated an income between 1,500 and 3,000 Afghani, or US\$30 to US\$60 per month (equivalent to \$1 to \$2 per day), compared to 43% in the previous survey. The proportion generating more than 3,000 Afghani or US\$60 per month (equivalent to around \$2 per day) reached 44%, compared to 36% in the previous survey. 90%, or 4,493, of the ex-combatants interviewed replied that they had a better life with their families than previously, and 95% attributed this change to the DDR reintegration programme (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006).

Compared to the fairly positive outcomes of the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey, we encountered many complaints about the high incidence of unemployment amongst ex-combatants, which caused difficulties for their families. Women said that in the army, their husbands had low but stable salaries, while after they were 'DDR-ed', many became unemployed. Only about 60% of the ex-combatants in this research reported they were employed. Respondents who had opened a shop said they had been forced to close it down because of diminishing returns, and others had sold their livestock because of financial difficulties and were now struggling to make a living in the informal sector. The accumulated stress of unemployment and increasing economic hardship also led to a rise in domestic violence, according to the head of the Department of Women's Affairs in Mazar-e Sharif.

As most of the programmes were carried out in a standardised manner, the benefits were not adapted to the individual needs or conditions of the beneficiaries. A trainee from Kandahar explained:

"The project people were very strict. At the end of the course a cow was given to each of us, worth 40,000 Afghani (US\$ 800). Where to put the cow?! We live on the edge of the city in small houses with only a tiny garden. There is no space for a cow. We decided to sell our cow on the market, as the majority did. The result was that our cow was worth 20,000 Afghani only. We came up with the plan to set up a dairy cooperation. Fifty cows would give a lot of milk. The project people were very strict again. They did not like our idea and were not willing to support our plan. We had to accept the cow and if not, there would be no cow at all. Thus we sold our cows against half the price. Why didn't they just give us the money? That would have been better."

This example from Kandahar shows that there was little room for flexibility or for individual wishes of ex-combatants. Moreover, no evidence was found that implementing partners had done assessments of the environment into which ex-combatants reintegrated. Time pressure and security issues certainly must have complicated affairs, but some sort of needs assessment or social mapping is the least that can be expected of partners accepting donor money to implement reintegration projects. Why give skills training if there is no labour market? Why give a cow to someone who cannot feed the cow or give it shelter? It can perhaps be argued that there was less scope and less flexibility for the actors to operate in the disarmament and demobilisation phases because of the highly political and therefore sensitive nature of the two processes. However, implementing partners could have claimed more space in the reintegration phase, especially since there were no strict or uniform programme guidelines that applied to all implementing organisations. Unfortunately, the reintegration components often seemed to be added on by military planners without proper involvement of reintegration specialists, while time schedules were made too tight to reach sustainable results.

As mentioned above, only one of the ex-combatants we interviewed had experienced problems with acceptance by the community. This is remarkable, as in most post-conflict societies social reintegration and reconciliation is highly problematic. According to the ex-combatants themselves, the community

perceives them as heroes because they fought the Russians and the *Taliban*. They also stressed that they had done nothing to harm others. Another reason cited for why ex-combatants were generally accepted in Afghanistan was that people understood there was no alternative for them but to join an armed group. Over the last three decades, many Afghans have been involved in the conflict in one way or another. The level of acceptance is also shown by the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey, which reported:

“The reintegration of ex-combatants within the community has been successful and more than 80% are participating in community activities; more than 33% are now part of the Shuras; 26% contribute to community activities repairing mosques, schools, digging water wells, etc.” (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006).

Those who were involved in stealing, collecting illegal taxes, rape, murder and intimidation were no longer able to live among the people and as a consequence they had left their areas. An important reason why ex-combatants are more accepted in Afghanistan as compared to other countries which went through DDR is probably that the majority of combatants never left their villages in the first place (Giustozzi and Rossi 2006:219) and continued to live in their communities during the conflict. This was confirmed in the interviews, in which the longest mission mentioned lasted from three to four days.

Though defending the country against an outside enemy was cited by many as a reason to fight again, the majority of ex-combatants said they were tired of fighting and would not take up arms again. Even though they lived in poverty and DDR did not improve their lives, they were not willing to join an armed group again for economic gains. However, this does not seem to be the situation everywhere.

A major risk is the continuation of links between the ex-combatants and their colleagues and ex-commanders. Responses to the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey indicated the following:

“The survey shows that 70% of ex-combatants have links with ex-colleagues. They also pointed out that the subjects of discussions are mostly political, social and economic issues. [...] It is also noted that 50% of ex-combatants have links with former commanders. This is relatively a big increase compared to previously registered links with commanders of 28%. IPs have reported that during the monitoring process it was observed that there is an ongoing extortion and pressure on the ex-combatants from their former commanders in demanding a sum of money from the ex-combatants or asking them to provide physical services” (UNDP/ANBP/DDR 2006).

An Afghan implementing partner interviewed was convinced that some ex-combatants in the training course had bought a new gun with the money they had received or earned by selling livestock, for example. According to an implementing partner in Kandahar, the large majority of people who enrolled in a reintegration course were not ex-combatants at all; they handed in an old weapon, received money or benefits in kind, and followed a course. According to this informant, some of them had close ties with the *Taliban*. With nothing to really integrate into, fighting with the *Taliban*, receiving monthly pay for it and polishing your old skills makes sense from a former fighter's perspective. Moreover, these people are of added value to the *Taliban* or other fighting groups with their newly purchased weapon and their experience in fighting. As one interviewee put it:

“If I would have experience in office work but I work in a shop and the shop has to be closed for some reason, what you think I would do? I would try to get back to my office. The same goes for fighting.”

An NGO director also said that some of the trained ex-combatants had returned to their commander, as that was the only place where they had a guaranteed job. If reintegration projects are being criticised or even rejected by ex-combatants, then this is not only a loss for project staff, donors and target group alike, but it will have more serious consequences in a highly volatile security environment. Without proper monitoring, ex-combatants could easily use or sell project benefits for illegitimate goals. And

apparently, some did.

Perspectives of receiving communities

According to the Afghanistan Omnibus Survey of November 2005, 92% of the respondents believed that the DDR of ex-combatants, together with the establishment of the ANA, had improved security in the country somewhat or considerably (UNDP 2006:10). In our interviews, most Afghans opined that DDR was only partly successful because it had not disarmed Afghanistan entirely. However, as stated above, this had never been the objective of the programme. But clearly, ANBP had failed to communicate this to the wider public. Many also pointed to continued fighting in the South to argue that DDR was ineffective in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. In contrast, respondents in Mazar-e Sharif generally believed that the local security situation had improved because of the implementation of the DDR programme. While before DDR, armed clashes between the Jamiat and Jombish factions were common and armed men roamed the streets, this was currently no longer the case in Balkh province. But in Herat, locals pointed to the increase in violent incidents around the cities and the rockets that were fired at the UN compound. As the insurgency has made greater encroachments in Herat than in Mazar-e Sharif, the impact of DDR on security is perceived to be less.

The improving security in Northern Afghanistan and the cities had a positive impact on the lives of ordinary Afghans, and especially on women and children, as they could go to school safely and women were able to go to work. Spouses of ex-combatants who had finished 12th grade were impacted more directly by the DDR programme, as they could receive teacher training packages and become teachers.

With regard to community acceptance of ex-combatants, a distinction was made between the commanders of *mujahideen* on the one hand and professional soldiers and regular *mujahideen* on the other. While Afghans understand that regular soldiers and *mujahideen* were forced to fight because of poverty or forced recruitment, former commanders were perceived as responsible for atrocities and human rights abuses. As a result, Afghans are highly frustrated with the dominance of former commanders in the present government and the associated corruption, as was confirmed by the survey data of the Asia Foundation (2006:14-16). A commonly heard sentiment was that former commanders had simply changed clothes and got government jobs while they should have been put to justice. And indeed, many former commanders and militia members now have positions in the police force and the government (Giustozzi and Rossi 2006). Even though one of the goals of DDR was to decrease the power of commanders, they have now been legitimised through their government positions. One woman who teaches in a girls' school in Mazar-e Sharif commented:

“People are forced to accept them, but they will never forget. The commanders still have influence and people are afraid of them. We are not sure they are really disarmed and people are still paying them respect. In the past they had a lot of influence and this influence still exists. I think that if the situation changes, we will see the commanders return [...] There are still commanders in every part of the city, they get done whatever they want. They are rich people and own a lot of land and will therefore continue to have influence.”

As an example of the power of commanders, an incident in Shiberghan in Jawzjan province was frequently cited, both by Afghans and NGOs. Jawzjan is a predominantly Uzbek area and the regional powerhouse of Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum. In this area, demonstrators took to the streets in a protest against the local (Pashtun) governor, replacing an image of the governor with that of Dostum. Some of the demonstrators were armed, and there is widespread belief that they were armed by Dostum, which illustrates the failure of DDR in disarming the commanders. Dostum also offered the Afghan government to fight the *Taliban* in the South with 10,000 of his men, indicating that the link between him and the rank and file is still there.

4 Diag programme

Origin and rationale of the DIAG programme

It was acknowledged from the start that the DDR programme had a number of limitations:

“(a) It ignored those armed groups which, in contravention of the Bonn Agreement, did not join the AMF as a result of factional rivalries; (b) several groups who entered the AMF and were formerly demobilised through the DDR programme retained in many cases their core staff and a substantial amount of light weapons, (c) finally, a number of commanders retained control of armed groups through their positions as governors, chiefs of police and other local official positions (DIAG 2006: Annex A).

By presidential decree 50, remnants of the AMF and groups that had never joined the AMF were declared illegal in June 2004. It was estimated that up to 1,800 illegal groups comprising some 120,000 persons were still operating in the country. Obviously, these figures are only estimates; no-one can claim to present fully reliable numbers. As the DDR project only dealt with the AMF forces, the follow-up DIAG project was formulated to deal with these illegal groups. These groups were power structures based on the personal authority of commanders. They were a legacy of years of conflict, foreign occupation, civil war and interference by terrorist groups. They were deemed to be a threat to the authority of the State as major sources of leverage for terrorists, insurgents, drug traffickers and other criminal groups (DIAG 2006:1). Officially an illegal armed group was defined as:

“a group of more than five armed individuals operating outside the law, drawing its cohesion from (a) loyalty to the commander, (b) receipt of material benefits, (c) impunity enjoyed by the members, (d) shared ethnic or social background” (DIAG 2006:2).

The DIAG project was meant to free the country from these parallel armed structures, thus finally allowing the re-establishment of the rule of law and good governance unhindered by the presence and activities of illegal armed groups (ANBP 2006:11). DIAG had three principal formal objectives:

- Governance: Extend the authority of the Government of Afghanistan through the development of its capacity for effective local governance;
- Security: Create the conditions for the establishment, maintenance and support of security throughout Afghanistan;
- Popular support: Strengthen public support for the lawful organs of the Afghan state and bring to the public’s attention the negative impact of illegal armed groups (DIAG 2006:3).

In order to facilitate DIAG, a legal framework was formulated which included the Gun Law and the Law on Private Security Companies. A database of illegal armed groups was compiled, the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission (DRC) was set up as the management and liaison organisation for DIAG, and operational guidelines and criteria were formulated. The DRC provides strategic direction to the DIAG process and comprises representatives of the Afghan ministries and agencies involved, UNAMA, ISAF, ANBP and donors. The DIAG Forum is the executive body for the DRC; a Joint Secretariat is responsible for coordination, information, communication, implementation, backstopping and monitoring; and Provincial Committees are responsible for the planning and implementation of activities at the provincial level. The Provincial Committees were to tailor the process to local needs and conditions. Donors contributing to the DIAG process meet in the DIAG International Consultative Group, hosted by Japan (DIAG 2006:4-7). It is striking to note that in the whole set-up of the DIAG programme no role was envisaged for international or local NGOs or Afghan civil society.

The DIAG project was officially launched on 11 June 2005 during the run-up to the National Assembly and Provincial Councils Elections (NAPCE). The Second Vice-President and DRC Chairman was charged with implementing DIAG with the support of the office of the National Security Advisor. The DRC was supported by staff from UNAMA and ANBP. The DRC used the opportunity to vet election candidates linked to illegal armed groups during the so called NAPCE process. Article 15-3 of the Electoral Law stated that no candidate for the *Wolesi Jirga* (Lower House of National Assembly) or the Provincial Council elections could belong to or command an armed group. Hence, candidates for the elections were prohibited from having ties to armed groups and the provincial DIAG committees were asked to categorise commanders in three groups: a green group who had disarmed and could run for election, a yellow group with whom agreement has been reached about disarmament and who could also run for election, and a red group who had not submitted their weapons and could therefore not be elected. However, after this information was sent to the DRC in Kabul, many groups were reportedly shifted from the red into the yellow group. This was confirmed by the AIHRC, which was a member of the electoral complaint commission, and which said that there was pressure from the side of the government to accept more candidates for the sake of security and stability. The government did not want to upset the main power brokers because this might impact security. As much as the inclusion of these candidates in the election might have bought the Afghan government short-term stability, in the longer term it runs the risk of alienating the population. Out of a total of over 6,000 preliminary candidates, 1,108 were initially suspected of having links to illegal armed groups. 207 candidates were provisionally disqualified; others withdrew and 124 handed over 4,857 weapons. Finally, 34 were formally disqualified by the Joint Electoral Management Body.

The Provincial Committees were charged with assessing the local security situation and disbanding illegal armed groups in accordance with central policy and guidelines. The approach chosen was to seek voluntary compliance, followed by negotiations, if needed. Only as a last resort could security sector resources be called upon to enforce compliance. DIAG could use a wide range of tools and levers available to the government: political, social and economic instruments, information and law enforcement. Weapons collection points were established in each province. Unlike under the DDR programme, demobilised soldiers and their commanders were not entitled to individual benefits, but development resources were earmarked to be allocated at community level, while the needs of secure and stable areas would also be programmed into broader national initiatives (DIAG 2006:7 and Annex A). The major implementation partners were the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP), the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), the Water Supply and Sanitation Project (WatSan) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA). It was realised that implementation of the DIAG programme would be difficult, and would require “maturity of the provincial governments and security sector” as well as “appropriate resourcing and prioritised support within the government of Afghanistan and international community” (DIAG 2006:2).

The DIAG programme was accompanied by an information campaign directed at the communities, the local authorities and local commanders. A total of 459 groups responded positively and surrendered some weapons and pledged to disband their formations. Until mid-January 2006 the project had collected 16,765 heavy and light weapons and over 86,000 pieces of ammunition. Apart from the illegal armed groups, DIAG also tried to identify government officials with links to illegal armed groups: the so called GOLIAGs. A list of 450 persons was compiled by the Joint Secretariat in September 2005 and consensus reached on 13 persons, who were given a 30-day voluntary compliance period within which they had to disarm and sever their links or face dismissal (ANBP 2006:11-12). Eight of them handed in a total of 1,080 weapons, and two were dismissed.

These achievements were not considered a very satisfactory result and were not interpreted as evidence that any illegal groups have effectively disbanded. On the contrary, it was reported that illegal armed groups continue to hinder government revenue collection, still raise illegal taxes, illegally exploit mineral resources, intimidate government staff, interfere with and subvert government procedures and programmes, and are involved in the narcotics industry (DIAG 2006:Annex A).

A strategic review of the DIAG programme was initiated by the second vice-president, “hastened by the irrefutable evidence of poor weapons surrender and, critically, the inescapable and uncomfortable fact that not one illegal armed group (IAG) had yet been disbanded. The international community mobilized and stepped forward to take an active part with national colleagues in fundamentally revisiting every aspect of the DIAG construct, from strategic assumptions to operational design” (UNDP 2007:5).

In a monitoring report of 31 October 2006 it was claimed that 5,557 illegal armed groups and GOLIAGs had been listed in all 36 provinces. The number of illegal armed groups and GOLIAGs engaged in the compliance process was only 2% of the total targeted and 18% in the provinces made 1st, 2nd and 3rd priority. More than 50% of the GOLIAGs are reportedly employed by the Ministry of the Interior (police chiefs and officers). The report lists as major constraints for implementing the DIAG programme: the lack of commitment of the highest level of authority, the lack of government capacity, the lack of confidence of the population that they will be safe without weapon, the increased prices of weapons on the market, the growing overall insecurity, the illicit income of illegal groups and GOLIAGs, and the lack of coordination (ANBP 2006b). The annual report 2006 states unequivocally that “the single most important lesson to emerge thus relates, unsurprisingly, to the issue of political engagement and commitment” (UNDP 2007:5). This included “a chorus of dissenting voices actively briefing against the project in parliament” (UNDP 2007:16). It was initially envisaged that the project would be over by the end of 2007, but it was acknowledged that more time was needed. The 2006 annual report states in this connection:

“It is now widely accepted that DIAG is a profoundly different undertaking from the previous ANBP project – DDR. It represents a different and infinitely more complex set of challenges [...] It is not feasible to define this project along with lines of other development projects with finite timelines. DIAG is a political process which, unless actively supported by all levels of government, will fail. Reenergizing this critical political support has required considerable and sustained effort” (UNDP 2007:12).

On 22 November 2006 the DIAG programme was reviewed in an extraordinary meeting under the Chairmanship of the President, who stressed the government’s support and commitment to the programme. The social aspects of the programme were reviewed and for the programme to succeed, the provision of alternate livelihoods and job opportunities was deemed necessary. Support from the people’s representatives in the *Meshrano* and *Wolasi Jirgas* had to be sought. The president also directed that the coordination and reporting systems be improved. He further ordered that a plan of action be prepared that would take into account a number of specific points. The responsibilities for the DIAG programme were to be transferred to the Ministry of the Interior and other appropriate ministries. More attention was to be paid to job opportunities, incentive and development packages, as well as the vetting of appointments of potential GOLIAGs (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2007:2-5). The 10-page action plan specified for the different levels of leadership nearly forty different required actions, their desired outcomes and the benchmarks (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2007:7-17). Shifting the responsibility for DIAG from ANBP to the Mol meets considerable scepticism about the capacities within the Mol to handle such delicate issues as DIAG, GOLIAGs and the registration of private security companies which are mainly run by former warlords. Doubts remain as to whether there is enough political will to regulate these and to deal with mid- and low-level commanders who have ties with government officials. The effective transfer of responsibilities to the Mol has been postponed several times and had not yet been accomplished as of early 2008.

Though the DIAG programme could not progress in 2006 as envisaged due to the deteriorating security situation, it had collected 26,065 light weapons and 3,905 heavy weapons as of June 2007 as well as a huge amount of ammunition. 72 GOLIAGs had been recommended for removal from government posts, while another 342 GOLIAGs had been identified so far. With regard to community development, consultative mechanisms had been established, information gathered and assessments made, and District Development Assemblies set up under the MRRD and NABDP mandates in a number of provinces

and districts. Development projects had started in Kapisa and Takhar (UNDP 2007:15; Conference on DIAG:2).

On 21 June 2007 a conference on DIAG was held in Tokyo under the co-chairmanship of Japan, Afghanistan and UNAMA. The participants appreciated the progress made during the last year, but also discussed the challenges facing DIAG operations, including security, narcotics, poverty, unemployment and the weak institutional capacity of law enforcement and security institutions. They recommended better coordination with the police reform. They further emphasised a smooth transition from disbandment to development and the need to provide resources to relevant programmes in this regard, such as the Afghanistan Stability Programme (ASP) and ANBP (Co-chair's Summary 2007). These recommendations reflected the observations made in UNDP's 2006 annual report, which also emphasised the need to inform and commit the different political levels and to influence public perception (UNDP 2007:19).

NGO and local perspectives on DIAG

Except for Halo Trust, which handles the weapons and ammunition disposal in DIAG, there are no NGOs involved in this programme. There is formally no reintegration component in DIAG which NGOs can implement, and NGOs are not involved in the provision of the community development programmes offered after compliance with DIAG. DIAG is set up as a government programme and the community development projects are basically carried out by government ministries and programmes. The NGOs that were interviewed for this research were mostly not aware of the DIAG programme. Those that knew about it, perceived it basically as a military programme, in which they had no role to play.

One NGO representative stated that DIAG looks nice on paper, but it does not solve the real problems of Afghanistan, as people who handed in their weapons are obviously not the problem. The most powerful commanders have found a place within the government by now and the only commanders who are now targeted by DIAG are 'the old and retired commanders', which caused Afghans to refer to DIAG as 'DIAGRA'. Another metaphor that is used frequently is that the DIAG programme only focuses on the 'low-hanging fruits', the easy cases. The more difficult ones are left undisturbed. These images point to a serious weakness of DIAG: the absence of an enforcement mechanism strong enough to really depose commanders and disband armed groups that pose a threat. As previously mentioned, Afghans are disenchanted with the presence of former commanders in the government, and DIAG's apparent lack of success to vet out major and powerful commanders from the election process has caused general disillusionment with DIAG. What is more, DIAG is perceived to be a mere token project to keep the donors happy. In this connection it was mentioned that the head of the DRC, Deputy President Karim Khalili, is a former commander himself. One interviewee even claimed that he was the biggest GOLIAG of all.

With respect to programmes such as DIAG, the government is seen by many as *dugana* or double-faced. One is the benign face shown to the international community, claiming that much effort goes into reforming the government and handling the problem of GOLIAGs. However, there is also a malevolent face, with the same government dominated by warlords and former commanders who have no interest at all in the success of the programme. The same goes for the West: some respondents believe that the real goal of the Western countries is not to bring peace to Afghanistan, but to keep the country unstable so as to keep a permanent presence in the region. The pressure from the international community on the DIAG process is therefore viewed with suspicion.

A question which cannot be answered, but only speculated upon, is whether DIAG could have benefited from NGO participation and would then have yielded better results. Though a case can be made for a broader and more inclusive approach, especially at a community level, it must be realised that DIAG is in final instance a highly sensitive political process that requires political will, perseverance and pressure at the highest levels to succeed.

5 Spontaneous demobilisation and reintegration

Outside the formal DDR programme, ex-combatants developed their own strategies for reintegration. The DDR programme was only one of many factors that influenced the lives and strategies of ex-combatants. Outside the DDR programme, ex-combatants created other opportunities, which will be described in this section. As has been pointed out previously, many ex-combatants have had to struggle to make a living and often the reintegration packages provided were not enough for them to attain a sustainable livelihood. Of the forty ex-combatants interviewed for this research, only five were working in the same profession in which they received training. Of the twelve respondents who had chosen livestock as a reintegration package and received a cow, only two still have the cow. The other ten were forced to sell it because they had no room to keep the cow or because of pressing financial needs (such as money for marriages and funerals).

Ex-combatants' strategies outside the DDR process

Because the reintegration package was enough to earn a living in only a few cases, ex-combatants have found other ways to earn money. Some of them found jobs in the government or the private sector. According to the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey, the availability of better paid work - especially in Kabul, where there are several alternatives - was an important reason for a number of ex-combatants to drop out of the reintegration programme. An IP in Herat reported a higher incidence of drop-outs there because of the better economic situation in Herat. Beneficiaries found jobs in trade or were able to migrate to Iran. Like other Afghans, ex-combatants adopt migration as a strategy to improve their lives, and use their own earnings or those of their family members to cover the costs at home. But most eke out a living from self-employment in the informal sector, by selling products on the streets or by starting small grocery shops. Pooling of resources, mostly by families, is also a strategy which enables them to start shops or to send off one of the family members to work abroad.

Ex-combatants may also gain access to development or income-generating programmes that are carried out for the population at large and do not specifically focus on ex-combatants. Some NGOs indicated that there were ex-combatants among their beneficiaries, though they had not specifically targeted this group. Sometimes ex-combatants have a job with an NGO or are engaged as volunteers. Health NGO Ibn Sina works with 1500 community workers and has established 1500 health committees in which former combatants are among the participants, according to the director.

Former commanders and the security business

One of the most lucrative businesses for former commanders and ex-combatants is the private security companies (PSCs). Driving through the neighbourhoods of Shahr-e Naw and Qalaye Fatullah in Kabul, you see matchbox-like structures in front of every NGO office, UN organisation, embassy, government office or private company, with two or more security guards. Because of the general security situation and targeted attacks on NGO and UN offices in Kabul, Kandahar and elsewhere, international NGOs and organisations have resorted to relying on PSCs for the protection of their premises and personnel. There is a big market for this, particularly in Kabul and in other cities. Ex-combatants lack the skills to find employment in the sectors they were trained for in DDR, but they do possess the skills necessary to be a guard. Many ex-combatants have therefore found work as guards.

Reportedly, many of the former commanders have started up their own PSCs in which they employ their former soldiers and which are in fact continuations of pre-DDR units. These units have continued to exist under the guise of PSCs and they distribute weapons to their personnel. Their clothing has changed, but the chain of command and patron-client relations between the commanders and their constituents remain

intact. General Jirad, for example, started a PSC with his own former soldiers, which is now a successful business. These men did not even need any training, as they were already experienced. Because of the burgeoning growth of PSCs in Afghanistan, a legal framework for PSCs has been set up under the MoI. According to a representative of an international NGO, the registration of PSCs led to the regulation of militias through the backdoor, by inserting them into an evolving legal framework. It is alleged that some of those new outfits are involved in organised crime.

Corruption as the price of cooptation: former commanders in the police

There are criminal groups or gangs that are deeply embedded in the state or in security departments such as the intelligence agency. They enjoy high-level protection from within the state – for instance, from the MoI – making it very difficult to take action against them or to remove them. Positions in the MoI – with its control over roads, border posts and natural resources – are definitely sought after by commanders. In addition, there is no proper payroll system. Commanders take their own people along when they join the police. There have been attempts to reform the police, but the MoI is constantly meddling with the list of police officers which prevented most of the intended reform. There are standardised procedures and a vetting process to get other people in, but they are not able to retain their positions. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to remove unsuitable figures because of their ties to senior figures in the government. In Mazar-e Sharif, for example, the brother of Ata (the governor of Balkh province), referred to by observers as a common criminal, was first the chief of the municipal police in Mazar-e Sharif and now controls the airport. There is immense pressure from the international community to get him removed from his position, but governor and brother Ata refuses to accept the termination of his contract. It is not so much a question of guns and disarmament, but of positions and the revenue that comes with these positions. Corruption, as one respondent remarked, seems to be the price of cooptation. It is a double-edged sword as it alienates the population, but is necessary to prevent opening a second front with local strongmen. In Afghanistan, many feel that the police are not there to protect you, but to get revenue through extortion, illegal taxing and taking bribes. However, seen from a different angle, we have to bear in mind Western definitions of corruption when discussing such practices. There may be a level of continuity with traditional norms and earlier interactive patterns that have ruled Afghanistan for centuries.

Commanders and illegal armed groups are also implicated in the cultivation and trafficking of drugs and the insurgency. GOLIAGs get revenue from the lucrative opium trade to finance their activities and pay their recruits. Without weapons, one cannot get involved in the drug trade as both the poppy fields and trade routes need to be protected. And with poppy harvest wages at approximately US\$10 per day (Giustozzi and Rossi 2006:16), it is evident that the drug trade is a tempting alternative for ex-combatants as well as other Afghans. In an interview with an ex-combatant in Mazar-e Sharif, we were told that poppy cultivation is sometimes a last way out for ex-combatants who are not able to make a living:

“But those who have been DDR-ed and now have nothing besides a small plot of land, are sometimes using it to grow poppy. It is a good option for them, because the government does not help. If you go from Kandahar to Herat there would be poppy even beside the road, the same road where the Americans and English drive in their tanks.”

The problem of illegal armed groups goes hand in hand with alternative livelihoods for both ex-combatants and poppy farmers. As long as there are no other opportunities available, the drug trade will continue to pose a threat to stability and development in Afghanistan. The same respondent also commented that even though one can earn good money by growing poppy, the real profit is for those in higher places:

“But the money is all for high people, not for normal people like us, people in the government, ministers and commanders all get money from the drug trade.”

6 Conclusions

The setting

1. Afghanistan is characterised by a violent and volatile history, with different types of conflicts occurring successively or simultaneously. The last thirty years have continuously seen overt, violent conflict that has devastated the country almost completely. In addition to countless casualties, wounded and traumatised civilians, this has also led to millions of refugees and displaced persons.
2. The war has affected Afghan polity and society in general. The country is not only highly diverse, but is also thoroughly divided along ethnic, political, religious and regional lines. These fault lines are deep and are laden with feelings of mutual hate, desire for revenge, etc. The long years of war have impacted nearly all places and spaces in Afghanistan, and they affect most households or families in one way or another.
3. The conflict has had a pervasive impact on the few and weak institutions the country had. Whereas the state in Afghanistan had never been characterised by a strong presence and full territorial control, decades of war resulted in multidimensional state failure, if not near collapse. The state had become unable to deliver constructive political goods of any sort, and most basic social services stopped functioning. Governance was at most carried out at the local level by a combination of traditional leadership, such as the elders and *shuras*, and warlords and gang leaders.
4. The inability of the state to carry out its mandate had serious consequences for overall human security. The state could not maintain the monopoly on violence, and thousands of illegal armed groups were, and still are, active. The lack of control gave drug runners, arms dealers, smugglers and criminals a free hand and room to manoeuvre. Society not only became militarised physically by the abundant presence of weaponry, but force, coercion and illegal dealings became the means for transacting societal business. Afghanistan became a highly militarised and criminalised society.
5. Except for the flourishing narcotics sector, the economy was devastated and was unable to feed, educate and care for the population. Dependence on multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental aid was widespread and continues up to present. Other survival mechanisms depended on informal, semi-legal or illicit activities. These problems were aggravated by the return of over 3.5 million refugees. The social and economic indicators of Afghanistan are among the lowest in the world.

Security concerns

6. The overall aim of the Bonn accords was to re-establish the authority of the Afghan state and to provide a secure setting for peace building and reconstruction. To this end, a series of activities both civilian and military were planned. These activities were funded and carried out by international agencies and the government, but this also led to an upsurge of activities by international and local NGOs.
7. Afghanistan is undergoing simultaneous and interdependent transitions in the political, security, juridical, economic, institutional, and governance domains. This process faces serious challenges and adverse conditions, and naturally has its ups and downs. Whereas the overall mood of the Afghan population has generally been positive and optimistic, there are signs of increasing popular concern in the realm of security, the economy (especially employment), and the effectiveness of the government to deliver on its promises. Corruption is frequently cited as a major problem.
8. In terms of security, it was the intention to defeat the *Taliban*, re-establish effective Afghan

security institutions (among which the ANA and ANP), and provide the security conditions for the Afghan state to acquire control over the provinces and to start reconstruction. There was to be a multi-ethnic and modernised army. In order to do so the existing Afghan Military Forces had to be de-conscripted and offered alternative livelihoods. In addition to the AMF, there were an estimated 1,800 illegal armed groups (IAGs) and hundreds, if not thousands, of government officials linked to illegal armed groups (GOLIAGs), for whom a solution had to be found as well, as they affected the authority of the state and its monopoly on power. To deal with the AMF, the IAGs and GOLIAGs, the government, with international support, set up the DDR and DIAG programmes in 2003 and 2005 respectively.

9. The DDR programme included only the AMF that comprised almost completely the troops of the Northern Alliance that had defeated the *Taliban*. DDR mainly covered the parts of the country where those troops had been recruited (the North). The DIAG programme was basically country-wide, but faced geographical limitations in practice due to the evolving security situation in 2007. By consequence, the conclusions of this study are also based mainly on field work in the northern parts of the country, though some clearly have a wider relevance.

DDR

10. The DDR programme was carried out by the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme, administered by the UNDP on behalf of the Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA and Japan, the lead nation for DDR. The programme was supported by eight international aid donors and was well resourced in terms of budget and staff.
11. Despite a slow start and some prevailing doubts, it can be argued that the DDR programme was implemented according to plan and reached its stated goals. A total number of 63,380 former AMF officers and soldiers, representing 260 units, were demobilised. Of that number, 57,431 had opted for a reintegration package. 57,629 light and 12,248 heavy weapons were collected. In sum, it can be said that the AMF was dismantled completely and the factions' war-fighting capacity removed. It was also suggested that this created the conditions for the successful deployment of the new ANA throughout the country. This obviously will depend on a variety of other factors, and has arguably not yet been achieved.
12. There have been a number of criticisms of the DDR programme. The first relates to the way the lists of the soldiers to be demobilised were compiled. It is alleged that commanders in general, and specifically powerful Tajiks from Massoud's command structure occupying posts in the MoD, were able to influence the composition of the lists. Undue influence is also said to have been used to insert persons on the list who in fact were not ex-combatants, in order to get access to the benefits of the programme. Hence, the RVCs were not up to their jobs of selecting and vetting the right candidates. Such cases have been confirmed in our research, but on the other hand, we did not receive information that many people had been *left out*. By consequence, the programme may have assisted more people than strictly necessary, i.e. it may have included a number that did not belong to the formal target group. We have not been able to ascertain the scale of this problem.
13. The second criticism concerns the disposal of light weapons. There is no conclusive evidence that the demobilised ex-combatants handed in all their weapons. It is widely suggested that they did not, or only produced old or damaged weapons while holding on to the more sophisticated and functioning ones. There is also some anecdotal evidence that a small number of demobilised persons may have joined an illegal armed group again and in effect put the money they received to start a civilian life towards the purchase of a new and better weapon.
14. No problems were reported with regard to the cantonment of heavy weapons. The recovery of those was nearly complete, with an achievement rate of 98%.

15. The reintegration component of the DDR programme serviced 57,431 persons, 3,619 of whom dropped out of the programme during its implementation, probably because the programme was not suitable for them or because they had found greener pastures, as was reported in several cases as well. Apart from a cash allowance, some clothes and food, the main component of DDR was the provision of training and/or jobs. Over 85% of this concerned agriculture, vocational training and small business support. There were also a number of special programmes for commanders and attention was paid to vulnerable groups, though their numbers were small. The numbers of child soldiers was fewer than 200 and the numbers of female ex-fighters only four. However, about 150,000 children of ex-combatants received educational benefits and de-worming treatment, while about 30,000 wives and female family members of ex-combatants received educational benefits or income-generating opportunities.
16. Some participants voiced the criticism that the training courses were not sufficient in depth and scope. They found it difficult to apply in practice what they had learned during the course. Many of them said that they had not found employment after completing their training. They complained that jobs were distributed on the basis of nepotism, patronage or corruption and that they had been excluded. What was more, not all packages provided always suited their needs and conditions or proved to be viable. Two out of the thirty IPs delivered sub-standard work.
17. The sustainability of the benefits was limited. Income-generating livestock had to be sold and small shops or other businesses closed down after some time. Reasons were shortage of money, or heavy expenditure due to illnesses, marriages or funerals. Several ex-combatants said that they had faced loss of employment and of status. Though the Fourth Client Satisfaction Survey of the ANBP claims that 90% of the ex-combatants had found employment, our interviews showed a lower percentage of about 60%. This may be due to the longer lapse of time after the DDR programme was completed or to regional variations. Moreover, our research did not include ex-combatants from Kabul, where more work might have been available.
18. Many ex-combatants developed their own strategies or mechanisms outside the official programme to find work or start economic activities on their own. These mainly include low-paying jobs, informal sector activities, trade and small businesses. Several ex-combatants or household members migrated to gain access to payments. Several ex-commanders started private security companies providing security guards and related services to international agencies and NGOs. Some ex-commanders have been inserted in government jobs, mainly on the police force. According to some observers, this provides them with a legal cover to simply continue their earlier work: corruption as the price of cooptation. Finally, some ex-combatants were able to benefit from NGO activities *outside* the DDR programme.
19. The reintegration programmes did not provide any major socio-psychological support. As far as we know, there were no severe problems in this regard. There were also few problems with regard to the acceptance of the ex-combatants in their respective communities. Many of them had never left their homes in the first place, as fighting was often an irregular and part-time affair. This particular group of 'DDR-ed' soldiers was not stigmatised; they were even considered heroes by their communities, though rare exceptions to this general picture were reported as well.

DIAG

20. By comparison, the DIAG programme was much more problematic than the DDR programme. In the first place, it dealt with groups that had been declared illegal, and their commanders and soldiers were not offered any individual benefits in return for their cooperation. However, areas that had become cleared from illegal armed groups would be entitled to community-level development projects and inclusion in other government programmes. The programme

therefore had to convince, persuade or even coerce people in the absence of other levers and within an increasingly difficult economic context. Success was dependent on the attitude and resolve of the national and provincial authorities to deal with illegal commanders and their soldiers as well as with government officials linked to illegal armed groups.

21. In the beginning, the DIAG programme made clever use of the parliamentary and provincial elections to vet election candidates and thus facilitate compliance. In this way it was able to enlist the cooperation of 124 candidates who handed over their weapons, while 34 candidates were formally disqualified by the Joint Electoral Management Body. There are also critics who say that the most important commanders and GOLIAGs were not targeted and were therefore able to take part in the elections unhindered. Many of them were actually elected, despite their history and status.
22. After this first step, progress in the DIAG programme was slow or absent. Though illegal groups and a few GOLIAGs responded and handed in some weapons, it is generally agreed that the programme was not able to solve the problem of IAGs and GOLIAGs. Thousands of them continue to operate and there are no signs that the DIAG process is really picking up, despite the recent attempts to reinvigorate the process. Successes that have been reported are considered showcases or in the category of 'low-hanging fruit', which is so easy to deal with. Other successes only concerned some old and retired commanders, hence the nickname of DIAGRA.
23. DIAG's disappointing performance was attributed to a lack of political backing and commitment, a lack of government capacity, a lack of confidence, increased weapons prices in the market, growing overall insecurity and the attractive illegal income generated by IAGs. A number of review meetings and conferences on the DIAG process were held. The president promised his full support and issued several instructions and guidelines to improve the programme. One is a more explicit link with economic development and others concern revisions of the implementation arrangements. It is too early to say whether this has led to any meaningful improvements in practice and better results.

The role of NGOs

24. The role of NGOs was limited to the reintegration component of the DDR programme. Most NGOs feared that their neutrality and safety would be compromised if they took part in a programme that they considered political and military in nature. Except for HALO Trust, no NGOs took part in the demobilisation and disarmament components and, again with the exception of HALO Trust, in the DIAG programme there was no NGO participation at all.
25. There is also no evidence of substantial, wider civil society involvement in the design or other aspects of the programmes or of societal debates or watchdog functions of any kind around the DDR or DIAG programmes. In our research we found that several NGO representatives were scarcely aware of the DDR and DIAG processes; some of them had never heard of this. No present Cordaid partners took part in the DDR programme. One ex-partner carried out a reintegration training programme in Kandahar.
26. Some thirty national and international NGOs took part in the reintegration component as an implementing partner responsible for training courses, small business support programmes, etc. This work was mostly subcontracted by ANBP/UNDP. A common criticism of NGOs was that they were neither involved in the design of the reintegration programme nor had much room to adjust the programmes on the ground. The autonomy of the organisation and the experience it had gained by working in the area were not sufficiently respected, they claimed.
27. The programmes carried out by the NGOs largely achieved their stated goals. A few of them showed weaknesses in terms of sub-standard deliveries and services. If wider objectives with regard to long-term gainful employment or business success were not met, these basically

revolved around problems of a wider lack of socio-economic progress, opportunities, purchasing power and economic demand in Afghanistan at large. Such issues were clearly outside the sphere of influence of the implementing partner, though better assessments and analyses at programme level could have prevented some of these problems.

28. We found no evidence that the contracting partners or larger INGOs carried out capacity building programmes for local NGOs or civil society partners in the framework of the DDR exercise.

The broader issues

29. The DDR and DIAG processes must be seen as part of the broader transitions Afghanistan is undergoing in the political, security, juridical, economic, institutional, and governance domains. These domains are interrelated, and progress in one depends on progress in the other.
30. Though the DDR and DIAG processes were facilitated by the UNDP-managed ANBP, they were in last instance government-led and owned programmes. They had to reckon with what was possible and realistic in the particular political and government context of Afghanistan and faced several political limitations.
31. In this connection, the DDR and DIAG processes have suffered from a certain lack of socio-economic progress (although it must be asked what could have realistically been expected after decades of warfare?), weak governance and implementation capacities, oscillating political support and commitment up to the highest levels, and a deteriorating security situation.
32. Whereas the DDR process was fairly well received and cooperated with, the DIAG process could not overcome a number of deeper divisions and clashes of interest and proved to be a politically more sensitive issue that could not be so easily solved. It remains to be seen whether the renewed pledges and arrangements can alter these fairly fundamental forms of resistance and conflicting interests.

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List of interviewees

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<i>General Abdullah Manan 'Abid'</i>	<i>DIAG Committee Balkh</i>	<i>General, Member DIAG Committee Balkh Province</i>	<i>03-07-07</i>	<i>Mazar-e Sharif</i>
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<i>Abdul Sabour</i>		<i>Ex-combatant</i>	<i>04-07-07</i>	<i>Mazar-e Sharif</i>
<i>Shafee Jan</i>		<i>Ex-combatant</i>	<i>04-07-07</i>	<i>Mazar-e Sharif</i>

<i>Tahir Jan</i>		<i>Ex-combatant</i>	<i>04-07-07</i>	<i>Mazar-e Sharif</i>
<i>Qari Saifuddin Saadat</i>		<i>Mullah</i>	<i>05-07-07</i>	<i>Mazar-e Sharif</i>
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<i>Dr. Fayz</i>	<i>Ibn Sina</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>15-07-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>
<i>Kavil Adhikarkunneth Mohan, Shapari Enshayan</i>	<i>ANBP</i>	<i>Senior Operations Management, Donor Relations / Reporting Officer</i>	<i>15-07-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>
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<i>Miss Dilawaiz, Noor</i>	<i>Noor Educational Centre</i>	<i>Deputy Director</i>	<i>15-07-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>
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<i>Masood Karokhail</i>	<i>Tribal Liaison Office</i>	<i>Deputy Director</i>	<i>12-07-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>
<i>Barbara Stapleton</i>	<i>European Committee</i>	<i>Political Advisor Special Representative</i>	<i>12-07-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>
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<i>Georg Varughese</i>	<i>Asia Foundation</i>	<i>Deputy Country Representative</i>	<i>15-07-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>

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<i>Mr. Cong</i>	<i>UNAMA South</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>29-05-07</i>	<i>Kandahar</i>
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<i>Three ex-fighters</i>		<i>Ex-combatants</i>	<i>29-05-07</i>	<i>Kandahar</i>
<i>Attiqulah</i>	<i>Mercy Corps</i>	<i>Agricultural Advisor</i>	<i>29-05-07</i>	<i>Kandahar</i>
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<i>Ahmed Wali Azizi</i>	<i>Program Implementation Unit of the UNDP</i>	<i>Officer in Charge</i>		<i>Kandahar</i>
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<i>Mohammad Salem Tahiry</i>	<i>German Technical Cooperation</i>	<i>Head of Sub Office Herat</i>	<i>26-07-07</i>	<i>Herat</i>
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<i>Rana Rahim</i>	<i>UNAMA Herat</i>	<i>Political Affairs Officer</i>	<i>01-08-07</i>	<i>Herat</i>
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<i>General Manan</i>	<i>Ministry of Interior</i>	<i>Future head of DIAG</i>	<i>08-08-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>
<i>Dr. Nasir</i>	<i>Halo Trust</i>	<i>Senior Programme Officer</i>	<i>08-08-07</i>	<i>Kabul</i>

Abbreviations

ACBAR	Afghan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACS	Afghans for Civil Society
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFS	Agency for Farming Support
AGEF	Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte im Bereich der Migration und der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (Association of Experts in the Field of Migration and Development Cooperation)
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AITM	Afghan Institute for Training and Management
AMF	Afghan Military Forces
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANBP	Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme
ANP	Afghan National Police
ARAA	Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
AREA	Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan
ASP	Afghanistan Stability Programme
ATC	Afghan Technical Consultants
BEST	Basic Education and Employable Skill Training
CFA	Child Fund Afghanistan
CIP	Commanders Incentive Programme
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
CORDAID	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DAFA	De-mining Agency for Afghanistan
DDG	Danish De-mining Group
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
DRC	Disarmament and Reintegration Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GOLIAG	Government Official Linked to Illegal Armed Groups
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HAFO	Helping Afghan Farmers Organisation
ICG	International Crisis Group
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	implementing partner
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MDU	Mobile Disarmament Unit
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan

PSC	Private Security Companies
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RVC	Regional Verification Committees
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNMACA	United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNUDG	United Nations Urban Development Group
US	United States
VARA	Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan
WatSan	Water Supply and Sanitation Project
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

Glossary

Loya Jirga: the *Loya Jirga* is a unique Afghan forum in which elders from the various regions and ethnic groups settle major national affairs. *Loya Jirga* is Pashto for Grand Council and it is only convened on special occasions.

Mullah: a religious teacher or leader

Meshrano Jirga: the House of the Elders or Upper House (part of the National Assembly of Afghanistan).

Mujahideen: the term can refer to any fighters of a *jihad*, a Muslim holy war, but has been mostly used widely to refer specifically to Afghan freedom fighters, rebels or warlords.

Shalwar kamiz: traditional dress worn by both women and men in South Asia. *Shalwars* are loose pyjama-like trousers. The *kamiz* (also *kameez*) is a long shirt or tunic.

Shura: an Arabic term that refers to the practice of consultation as was practised at the time of the Prophet, and might also be called a *jirga*, which is a Pashto word. These councils would traditionally be convened with the aim of solving problems and can thus be seen as reactive and not pro-active. In principle, membership is open to all male adults.

Shura-yi Nazar: literally meaning Supervisory Council; the complete term Shura-yi Nazar-i Shamali refers to a regional and political structure founded by Ahmad Shah. Nearly all core members are Panshiris and now support a political party known as Nizhat-i Milli (ICG 2003: 1).

Taliban: the *Taliban* was originally organised in Kandahar in September 1994. The principal members were all graduates of Pakistani Islamic schools (madrassas) which were controlled by the fundamentalist organisation Jamiat-i-Ulema. *Talib* means student. Comprised primarily of Pashtuns, the *Taliban* was controlled from the beginning by *mullah* Mohammad Omar. Their primary goal was the creation of an Islamic revolution within Afghanistan to overthrow the Russian-backed government and replace it with an Islamic theocracy.

Wolesi Jirga: the House of the People or Lower House (part of the National Assembly of Afghanistan).

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