

**Who's helping Who?  
NGO Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance**

**With Special Reference to Afghanistan  
(1985 -2001)**

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## Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the coordination of humanitarian assistance in complex political emergencies undertaken by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), primarily assistance directed towards forced migrants. The study aims to address the paucity of literature and theories on NGO coordination, and focuses primarily on the situation in Afghanistan during the period 1985 to 2001.

The research is drawing on the author's field experience and an extensive literature review outlining and discussing complex political emergencies, forced migration, NGOs and NGO coordination. An empirical investigation was carried out at village level in Herat, Afghanistan, in a highly conflict-ridden environment. Questions emerging from the primary field research were then followed-up through interviews and surveys among NGOs at a regional and national level in Afghanistan, and later broadened and compared with case studies from other conflict contexts. This in order to respond to the following hypothesis:

*The existing NGO coordination arrangement seems to serve primarily the interests of their NGO members, by promoting their organisational interests and facilitating interagency communication, rather than serving the interests of their intended beneficiaries. NGOs are willing to join a coordinating body, but they will remain reluctant to be directed by such a coordination structure if it limits their organisational independence.*

The major contribution of this thesis is the empirical findings on forced migrants knowledge and views on NGOs and the assistance they provide, and to what extent such assistance meet the needs of forced migrants. This includes knowledge on why forced migrants choose to flee and return, how their needs and resources are assessed, to which extent their need for humanitarian assistance actually is met and how timely such humanitarian interventions have been. Here the prime finding is that the local population was essentially disconnected from the NGO decision making and coordination process.

Further evidence is then provided on how divided the NGO community is in Afghanistan, manifested by the presence of five coordinating bodies. The thesis presents NGOs attitude towards coordination, how useful they assess the coordinating bodies and their activities, why they reject a forced coordination practise and underlines their scepticism towards allowing forced migrants larger influence on project and priority settings. And, finally, the thesis argues that the NGOs lack of willingness to join one common Afghan coordinating body is due to their fear of losing influence and independence. Which, in sum, leads to a conclusion that NGO coordination is primarily benefiting the NGOs, not their intended beneficiaries.

The above cited findings lead to a confirmation of the hypothesis for this thesis, and, furthermore, the empirical findings lead the author to suggest a more realistic approach to NGO coordination in complex political emergencies.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of York. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other University.

Arne Strand

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## Introduction

### Identifying the Research Problem

Over recent decades we have witnessed a mushrooming of organisations providing humanitarian assistance, prominently defining themselves as non-governmental or volunteer organisations (NGOs). These argue that they are able to provide such assistance in a more expedient, efficient, less bureaucratic and more cost-effective manner than government entities or agencies of the United Nations (UN). They insist, moreover, that they are able and willing to provide such assistance in countries and areas in conflict or open war, frequently defined as complex political emergencies where the humanitarian crises are often prolonged, causing massive forced migration.

The rapid increase in the numbers of humanitarian actors operating in conflict contexts has been followed by a demand for improved coordination of humanitarian assistance. Coordination efforts are thought to function as a remedy against duplication of aid projects, badly planned and implemented relief efforts, lack of knowledge among humanitarian agencies on the actual situation they operate in, and, in general, against inefficiency within the wider aid sector. At the same time, academics and humanitarian workers alike have expressed concern that humanitarian actors lack the will to commit themselves to such coordinated efforts.

Through the author's involvement in a coordinating body for NGOs working in Pakistan and Afghanistan during the period 1988-91 and 1993-97, with two years spent on the Steering Committee and considerable time in attendance at a range of thematic and regional sub-committees, a number of questions emerged about the effectiveness, impact and influence of such coordination efforts in improving the provision of humanitarian assistance. And, furthermore, why it should prove so difficult to get different types of NGOs to collaborate in the field when they all emphasised the adherence to the same humanitarian objectives.

These questions led the author to conduct a more systematic review of literature to find explanations why there could be such a gap between the frequently heard NGO rhetoric advocating for more coordination and inclusive approaches and the opposite reality witnessed in the field. The literature identified focused mostly on how to organise coordination bodies, while less attention was paid to why coordination attempts might fail or prove so difficult to organise, or to develop theories that might help to explain

coordination. The question of why there is such a gap between NGOs based in Islamic and Western countries was pursued through the author's MA study at the University of York. This search did not, however, lead to any further clarity, rather identification of a range of publications questioning the value of such coordinated efforts, commenting upon the paucity of literature on the subject and recommending further studies. This location of gaps in the existing literature, combined with the author's own wish to better understand why NGO coordination so frequently failed, prompted the formulation of this research project.

## The Theoretical Approach and Research Question

Given the paucity on theories on NGO coordination a review of different theories and characteristics of forced migration, complex political emergencies, of NGOs and of various NGO coordination arrangements is used to guide the analysis of the thesis.

Thus the approach for this study was not to start with one specific theory to be tested. Rather to draw on an analysis of the empirical investigation to understand how the intended beneficiaries judged the appropriateness and timeliness of the NGO assistance to form further questions for staff of NGOs and their coordinating bodies. And then use the review of the various theories to develop a comparison of the empirical findings with existing theory.

Based on this approach the research question for this thesis is thus:

*In complex political emergencies, the coordination of humanitarian aid provided by NGOs to forced migrants, who constitute one particular group of beneficiaries with established rights to assistance, is generally regarded as an important measure to increase the effectiveness and timeliness of such assistance. However, studies of recent coordination efforts indicate that these have made the delivery of aid neither more timely and effective, nor more in accordance with the needs of intended beneficiaries. Thus, questions arise as to whether the coordination of humanitarian assistance is adding value to relief and development processes, and if so in what way; or whether coordination could be improved through the application of other methods.*

## The Central Thesis

The identification of this research question leads to the formulation of a hypothesis to be tested throughout the research project:

*The existing NGO coordination arrangement seems to serve primarily the interests of their NGO members, by promoting their organisational interests and facilitating interagency communication, rather than serving the interests of their intended beneficiaries. NGOs are willing to join a coordinating body, but they will remain*



*reluctant to be directed by such a coordination structure if it limits their organisational independence.*

A further number of challenges are identified that are suspected to reduce the NGOs' and the NGO coordinating bodies' ability and commitment to seeking a more commonly coordinated approach.

A set of four sub-thesis is therefore defined:

- A prevailing mistrust between NGOs and their coordinating bodies based on existing differences in culture, religion and organisational practice, as well as perceived influences on the NGOs from their external donors (groups, nations or regional actors) pursuing their individual political, military and/or financial interests; leading to competition between NGOs and their coordinating bodies on financial and organisational grounds.
- Unclear and divergent perceptions of what coordination implies, what distinguishes it from collaboration and cooperation, and whether it is best achieved through control or facilitation. Perceptions range from the informal sharing of information to joint execution of relief programmes and strategic planning; and from the need for a lead agency to coordinate humanitarian efforts, to a free-for-all approach.
- A lack of humanitarian and organisational professionalism within the NGO sector and within their coordination arrangements, and diverging views on their roles and relations towards states, donors and other humanitarian actors. In addition, possible objections against a wider coordination effort among humanitarian agencies based on the specialisation of single agencies or mandates serve to prevent formalised coordination efforts.
- Varying understandings of the importance of and willingness within the NGO community to allow forced migrants to take part in decision-making processes, to make use of participatory methods to establish the needs and aspirations of this group of intended beneficiaries and, furthermore, to share and secure these interests among a wider range of humanitarian actors.

The formulation of hypothesis and sub thesis further allows for identification of dependent and independent variables to be used for setting the research priorities.

In this research project the dependent variable will be:

- Effectiveness of humanitarian assistance provided by NGO to forced migrants.

The following independent variables are identified:

- NGOs willingness and ability to identify the needs of the forced migrants.
- NGOs willingness and ability to respond to the needs identified (by the forced migrants).

- NGOs willingness and ability to coordinate their assistance efforts with other NGOs and humanitarian actors.
- NGO coordinating bodies willingness and ability to foster and encourage coordination among own members and towards humanitarian actors, donors, governments and other coordinating bodies.

The study aims to provide a better understanding of how the forced migrants view the NGOs involved in assistance provision and coordination, and NGOs capacities and limitations in operating together with their intended beneficiaries and other humanitarian actors. The goal is to present a critical review of how they can play a better role in resolving existing and future migration situations. A range of sub-objectives are therefore identified to broaden the scope of the study, these are:

*Sub-objective A: Particularities of complex political emergencies*

There is a need to detail what characterises complex political emergencies and set them aside from more regular rehabilitation and development situations. And, to what extent such emergencies lead to increased levels of forced migration, how they influence state and civil society and, finally, their impact on how humanitarian assistance might be provided for those in need.

*Sub-objective B: Characteristics of forced migration in complex political emergencies*

From the start there is a need to establish what forced migration is and what sets it aside from other forms of migration, and how complex political emergencies influence such migration patterns. Given that Afghanistan is selected as the main case for this study, there is further a need to examine whether Islam holds any special influence on forced migration in Muslim countries and areas, and certainly what legal rights forced migrants have for assistance in accordance with international conventions.

*Sub-objective C: Typology of NGOs assisting forced migrants*

Non-governmental organisations constitute a very diverse group of assistance providers, thus there is a need to provide an overview of different types of NGOs, of their position within civil society and towards forced migrants, and certainly of their methods of interacting with forced migrants, providing them protection and assessing their resources and humanitarian needs.

*Sub-objective D: Variety and characteristics of NGO coordination arrangements*

Coordination of humanitarian assistance is generally seen as a remedy for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of such assistance. There is thus a need to review general theories on coordination and see how such coordination is organised at different levels, internationally and nationally, and particularly in complex political emergencies. As one might assume that NGOs need to relate to a range of other humanitarian actors and their intended beneficiaries when coordinating their humanitarian activities, such interactions must be mapped and analysed.

*Sub-objective E: Afghanistan as a complex political emergency*

Having selected Afghanistan as the main case for this study there is a need for a further examination of what characterises this particular complex political emergency. This necessitates a review of history and patterns of forced migration and how this long-lasting emergency has influenced the ability of the state, civil society, NGOs and NGO coordination arrangements to assist forced migrants.

A structured analysis of these topics will provide an empirical documentation enabling an in-depth discussion of the hypothesis and sub-theses outlined above.

## Research Methodology

As a starting point the author drew heavily on his own experience from involvement in the practical coordination of emergency and rehabilitation efforts in Afghanistan and from active involvement in an NGO coordination body.<sup>1</sup> The MA study on Post-war Recovery with the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) added further knowledge to the subject, not least on the conflict between Western and Islamic NGOs.

A limited literature review was first undertaken on the issues of forced migration, complex political emergencies, non-governmental organisation and NGO coordination, before deciding on the practicalities of the fieldwork. Faced with a paucity of literature on theories on NGO coordination, and particularly on intended beneficiaries' involvement in these, emphasis was placed on seeking empirical data on these subjects.

The main fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken in Afghanistan in collaboration with two other Norwegian researchers during spring 1999. Based on the first analysis of the empirical material, and meeting with an extended advisory group at the PRDU, two further strategies were devised. The first was to seek further knowledge on the interaction between NGOs and their intended beneficiaries and on types of coordination activity undertaken by NGO coordination bodies in Afghanistan. The aim was to strengthen the Afghan case as the core of this study. The second strategy was to seek additional empirical evidence on how NGO coordination was undertaken in some other countries with major humanitarian problems, but with a context differing from the Afghan one. This led to follow-up field research in Afghanistan during 1999 and 2000, and shorter visits to the Aceh province of Indonesia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sri Lanka. The fieldwork was completed by early 2001.

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<sup>1</sup> The author was a member of the ACBAR Steering Committee and attended a range of sectoral and thematic meetings during 1989-91 and 1993-97.

## Empirical Investigation

The objective of the empirical investigation was to seek in-depth knowledge about a specific group of intended beneficiaries, in this case forced migrants from Herat Province in Western Afghanistan. And, moreover, how this group perceived the NGOs and how useful the assistance provided had been for saving lives and in the recovery process, to what degree it had been coordinated and if this had enhanced the quality and impact of the humanitarian assistance. This part of the research included a series of open and exploratory interviews, laying the basis for a series of semistructured interviews conducted by the researchers and a separate survey undertaken by Afghan research assistants to widen the evidence gathering by including a neighbouring village and also to mitigate any biases against western researchers.

Based on analysis of the initial findings a further survey was designed for staff and management of Herat based NGOs providing assistance in the selected villages, expanded by interviews of key NGO staff, employees of the two NGO coordinating bodies, government officials and UN staff members.

These interviews brought up a range of additional questions that were subsequently pursued in a separate review of NGOs and UN's needs assessment strategies for Afghanistan and a survey exploring NGOs more general view on NGO coordination and possibilities for merging the five current NGO coordination bodies into one common one.

To complement the Afghan study, comparison was sought with 3 other cases, namely the coordination of Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the coordination structures in states with a functional government structure in Indonesia (Aceh province) and in Sri Lanka.

As for Afghan case selection, a research area was sought that would be representative when it came to war history, migration practice (including return), NGO presence and activity and, furthermore, NGO coordination. A cluster of villages at the outskirts of Herat in North-western Afghanistan was selected, also because forced migration of Afghans to and from Iran is understudied compared to the similar situation in Pakistan.

Research in areas marked by long lasting conflicts and with an authoritarian and oppressive regime as the Taliban in Afghanistan posed a range of ethical questions. A high degree of trust must be established between the researcher and the informers, to ensure that the informers feel assured that the information they volunteer is treated with the necessary confidentiality to avoid any security risk. Not least as communication lines had to be established with the Taliban authorities as well to demystify the actual research process and avoid raising suspicion when interviewing villagers and NGO staff. Special attention was paid to the research assistants, to ensure that they abided by the confidentiality code promised to the informers and conducted their job in a respectful manner.

The author's NGO background required further attention to clarify and mitigate the insider/outsider issue. Allowing the villagers influence on which research question to

be pursued with the NGOs and avoiding research in villages previously visited by the author or association with NGOs the author either had worked with or funded were two ways of addressing such challenges. Caution was further taken when interviewing NGO employees to clarify the distinction between the author's previous NGO employment and the current research activity.

## Study Structure

To enable a discussion on the above outlined hypothesis, this study is structured into three main parts. In the first part a review is presented of what constitutes and characterises a complex political emergency. Next, various theories of forced migration are discussed before the magnitude of the phenomena and some central themes in migration research are reviewed (Chapter 1). Then non-governmental organisations are detailed, leading to a discussion of their strengths and weaknesses, their position within civil society and more formalised ways of interaction with and assessing the needs of their intended beneficiaries (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 presents NGO coordination, followed by a review of the history and structure of the international humanitarian coordination system drawing on findings from the supplementary field research.

The second part discusses the research methodology applied (Chapter 4), and argues for the use of different research methods in complex contexts to enable a triangulation of information. A comprehensive presentation of the Afghan context is then provided (Chapter 5), before the aim, objectives and activities of the Afghan NGO coordination arrangements are reviewed in detail (Chapter 6), as is the interaction between these, UN- and donor-established coordination efforts. Special attention is drawn to the relationship between NGO coordination bodies and forced migrants, before it is suggested that NGOs primarily establish coordination arrangements to secure and promote their own interests rather than those of their intended beneficiaries.

The third part of this study focuses on the empirical findings from a cluster of villages in the outskirts of Herat City in Western Afghanistan (Chapter 7), a review of NGOs activities and coordination effort in Herat, supported by findings from coordination efforts at the national level and particular focus on NGOs needs and vulnerability assessments (Chapter 8).

Having discussed these findings more broadly, a discussion of the sub-thesis follows before the hypothesis is tested (Chapter 9). And, finally, drawing on findings from this discussion, a more realistic approach to the NGO coordination of humanitarian assistance to forced migrants in complex political emergencies is presented.

## The Audience

This thesis is intended for several audiences. Firstly, the academic audience that will judge the work according to academic standards and, hopefully, find it to add

knowledge and new insight into the field of Post-war Recovery Studies. Secondly, staff of NGOs, coordinating bodies and donor organisations that might use the findings and suggestions provided to improve their coordination efforts.

## Main Contribution of the Thesis

This thesis provides a range of research contributions. A major contribution is the detailed overview and theory discussion it provides of forced migration issues and research, complex political emergencies, the NGO sector and, certainly, NGO coordination. The presentation of the Afghan case and the NGO community and their historical and present humanitarian efforts adds insight into an understudied area, and add knowledge to the present Afghan rehabilitation and development process.

The main contribution, however, is the empirical findings documenting the limited value humanitarian assistance provided by NGOs holds for forced migrants, and what inherited limitations there actually are to NGO coordination. These findings suggests that NGOs are likely to resist any attempts to limit their organisational independence and that they primarily regard coordination as a tool for advocating their own interests rather than those of the forced migrants.

## 1. Complex Political Emergencies and Forced Migration

Forced migration is commonly seen as a result of conflict, instability and insecure environments. Moreover, it often occurs in countries that are defined as experiencing a complex political emergency (CPEs) where a breakdown of state governance reduces the ability or will of the state to protect and provide for its citizens. It is further noted that in many of these situations assistance for forced migrants is provided by humanitarian agencies, including members of the United Nations (UN) system or one of many inter- or non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Thus, this Chapter starts by providing an introduction to the characteristics of complex emergencies and what differentiates these and complex political emergencies, leading into a review of what effects a CPE might hold on the national state and civil society organisations. A wider discussion is then presented on humanitarian assistance in CPEs, including the continuum debate, the gaps and linkage model, differences between relief, rehabilitation and development aid and assistance and the difficulties with such funding labels.

A definition of the term ‘migration’ then follows as well as what characterises ‘forced migrants’ within the larger group of migrants, documenting how blurred and politically sensitive these categories are. The numbers and the rights of *refugees* and *internally displaced persons*, the two main internationally recognised groups of forced migrants are also detailed. The reasons for setting out on a flight might vary and there is an ongoing discourse as to how individual or group oriented a forced migration process might be.

Theories and approaches to migration research are reviewed, aiming at illustrating how theory has developed both as an interaction and as a struggle between empirical research and international policy interests, in which the humanitarian agencies have played a major contributing factor from their dual position of shaping policy through review of practice and from being tools for international political and financial interests. Central themes in such a discourse are Islam’s influence on migrants in the Muslim world, gender and migration and the complexity of the migration circle, frequently referred to as *flight*, *temporary relocation* and *voluntary return*.

Although humanitarian intergovernmental and international organisations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are mandated to assist specific groups of forced migrants, large groups of forced migrants in fact fall outside these agencies’ mandates and resources. Forced migrants’ right to aid and assistance, and the role of the NGOs in providing such assistance is then finally discussed in more details.

## 1.1. Complex Emergencies

According to the UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Kenzo Oshima (2001), by the end of 1999 there were 40 armed conflicts being fought on the territories of 36 countries. In these conflicts, 75 % of the victims were civilians. In UN and NGO parlance such conflicts are often referred to as complex emergencies, of which there are a number of definitions, or rather descriptions, as well as variations of the term.

### 1.1.1. Defining a 'Complex Emergency'

The United Nations Organisation for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), which Mr. Oshima heads, presents a definition of a complex emergency established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)<sup>2</sup> in December 1994 (OCHA 1999: 6), which then stands as the official UN description:

*(...) a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing United Nations program.*

Based on this description, on 13.03.2002 OCHA (Reliefweb 2002) defined the following countries and areas as complex emergencies: Afghanistan; Angola; Balkans; Caucasus (Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia); Colombia; Congo; DPR Korea; East Timor; Eritrea-Ethiopia; Great Lakes (Burundi; DR Congo; Kenya; Rwanda; Tanzania; Uganda); Horn of Africa Drought, Indonesia – Maluku; Iraq; Occupied Palestinian Territory, Russian Federation – Chechnya; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Sudan; Tajikistan; West Africa and West Timor.

However, much of the debate on complex emergencies stems from a report written for another UN agency, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), by Dr. Mark Duffield (1994: 1-3). With reference to Angola and Bosnia, he concluded that complex emergencies were a growing phenomenon in the 1990s following the increase in intrastate conflicts at the end of the cold war period, an observation discussed in more detail by Munslow and Brown (1999: 208). However, Duffield describes the term as 'somewhat limited and inappropriate' and as a 'neutral metaphor for civil war'. His main criticism is its inability to capture what he regards as 'deep and protracted political crises engendered by profound social change', whereby he rejects the notion that any emergency can be just 'simple'. He attributes the use of the term to agencies adapting definitions that correspond with their agenda or mandates 'rather than emerging from attempts to understand a situation.' Despite his dislike for the term Duffield nevertheless finds it more fruitful to 'regard complex emergencies as being of a different species to natural disasters.' And he further suggests that 'instability, tension, contradiction, sudden reversals and unpredictable change more closely approximates the "normal" course of events than the linear assumption that surrounds development.' Thus, he concludes that instead of playing

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<sup>2</sup> The IASC is the highest humanitarian coordination body, which includes not only UN agencies, but also non- and intergovernmental organisations.



down the political dimensions of a given conflict, it 'is precisely their political quality which gives complex emergencies their unique characteristics.'

In a later review Duffield (1998: 14), as a major theoretical contributor in this field, adds another dimension to the debate on the provision of humanitarian assistance in emergencies, holding the view that 'a sharp distinction between short-term emergency relief and longer-term development aid is rarely useful in planning support for countries in open conflict.' He introduces the term 'post-modern conflict' which, according to him, 'reflects the manner in which political authority is being restructured in the South under the influence of globalisation', and where post-modern transformation 'is the outcome of conscious and deliberate actions on the part of the rulers and their allies in the context of the changing nature of political authority and economic practice.' He questions the developmental model of conflict, where conflict is just an interlude or aberration in a more linear development process, and advocates instead the need, in certain conflicts, to regard the conflict as the 'normal' situation. Duffield argues that the developmental relief notion, which he claims to be a donor adaptation, has abolished distinctions between relief and development, with the consequence that 'humanitarian aid has been folded into the framework of conditionality that characterises development assistance' (1998: 75-77).

The distinctions between relief and development and what frequently is termed the 'continuum debate' will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter. However, as regards theory development, Macrae and Bradbury (1998: 7) made a contribution towards understanding the difficulties encountered by humanitarian agencies operating in complex emergency situations through a 1998 report, again commissioned by UNICEF. Here they argued that they found the term 'post-conflict' problematic and would rather, and thus more in line with Duffield's argument, refer to a 'situation of chronic instability', not least since this 'does not help to articulate strategies in situations of protracted violence.' Discussing the term 'developmental relief', that is, development aid being incorporated into humanitarian aid programming, they caution against the adoption of such approaches. Their main concern is the lack of a 'unified and legitimate state' as a partner for development processes, thus questioning the possible sustainability of such programmes (Macrae and Bradbury 1998: 60). Their arguments seem to be that, given the unpredictability of a complex emergency situation and the lack of a functional or legitimate state actor, aid agencies should confine themselves to providing emergency relief as there is no room for longer term planning or the establishment of more development-oriented aid processes. While this argument might be valid within certain countries, or regions of these countries, or for certain periods of time, it can be questioned whether it can legitimately be applied to all countries and regions that have been branded as complex emergencies.

Based on the discussions cited above and the detailed evaluation of the (failure of) political and humanitarian intervention in Rwanda, Alistair Hallam developed a more detailed definition of what constitutes a typical complex emergency. Published firstly in the Relief and Rehabilitation Network (RNN) Good Practice Review 7 (Hallam 1998) and later transformed into a paper published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in their Evaluation and Guidance Series (OECD 1999), he presented the following characteristics of a complex emergency:

- A collapse of state functions.
- Intra-state rather than inter-state conflict.
- Difficulty in differentiating between combatants and civilians.
- Violence directed against civilians and civil structures.
- Fluidity of the situation on the ground.
- A lack or absence of normal accountability mechanisms.
- The potential and actual development of war economies.
- The potential for humanitarian assistance to prolong the conflict.
- A multiplicity of actors.

It is, however, interesting to note that whereas a collapse of state functions is listed first in the RRN publication, as quoted here, it has been omitted from the OECD list without any explanation.

### 1.1.2. Complex Political Emergency

While Hallam developed a check-list to verify whether an emergency should be categorised as complex or not, Goodhand and Hulme (1997: 72-74) went in the opposite direction by describing the diversity of the emergencies, or, as they termed it, their ‘often dissimilar forms of conflicts’. Their argument is that there are some broad common categories that can be identified in what they describe as complex political emergencies (CPE), highlighting the political dimension of an emergency situation. According to the authors CPEs would combine a range of features, starting with being a hybrid form of conflict that is not necessarily confined to one state but can exist within and across state boundaries. CPEs would need to have a *political origin*, in which Goodhand and Hulme, drawing on Lewer and Ramsbotham (1993), identify competition for power and scarce resources as the central dynamic in social conflict, whereas politics ‘is taken to mean any activity or process associated with changing or maintaining existing patterns of the distribution of power.’

They further identify the *protracted duration* of the conflicts and argue that emergencies are ‘embedded in, and are expressions of, existing social, political, economic and cultural structures’, which they define as existing *social cleavages*. Within these societies there are *predatory social formations*, often ethno-nationalist in nature and with strong antipathy for other social groups, that can easily be manipulated by conflict entrepreneurs and political opportunists, where ‘the most violent and unruly elements of society appears in leadership roles and criminality becomes the political norm.’ Finally, they include the international agencies and their wide range of options, and the *multi-mandate nature* of their response. This latter point is expanded upon by Munslow and Brown (1999: 208), who argue that ‘the complexities of complex emergencies stem from complexes within the institutions themselves’, and institutions available to deal with complex emergencies ‘often lack the necessary mandate’. This, according to Kent (1987: 62), can also be attributed to the role donors play in a CPE, where the inconsistent responses of governments ‘perpetuate unsystematic behaviour throughout the entire relief network.’

While Goodhand and Hulme have attempted to provide a more comprehensive view of what constitutes a complex political emergency, they have not exhausted the discussion on what constitutes the difference between ‘God made’ and ‘man made’

emergencies, nor have they expanded on how major political changes, such as the end of the Cold War, have influenced the political dimension of CPEs. However, while the term has been twisted and ‘tweaked’ in recent years, being referred to as *protracted emergencies* (Ofstad, Suhrke et al. 1999: 130) and *chronic political emergencies* (Macrae 2001), little is found of further theoretical development or a deeper understanding of how exactly a complex political emergency affects the lives of the people living under such conditions. This is a point also made by Harvey (1998: 206), who states that there ‘is little, if any analysis of how CPEs break down civil society and what implications this has for rebuilding’. Apthorpe, moreover (1999, quoted in Nafziger and Vayrynen (2002)), introduces the term *complex humanitarian emergency*, which he suggests is ‘a diplomatic euphemism for a chronic political emergency as distinct from a natural emergency’, which might be seen as highlighting the fact that many CPEs develop into permanent humanitarian emergencies and not only a series of man-made or natural disasters.

However, from the above discussions on definitions and theory development a number of more specific issues needs to be addressed, as they will be instrumental in the further analysis of the role of humanitarian agencies, national institutions and individuals living, governing and assisting people in complex political emergencies. Hence, there are two main issues that will be further detailed: one is the impact of a CPE on state and society and the second is how CPEs influence the provision of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation and development efforts.

## 1.2. Effects on State and Civil Society

An important issue for deliberation on any given CPE is whether such a complex emergency situation can have a detrimental effect on the political and administrative system of a country defined as a CPE. This may be either as state institutions are contested by actors competing for power, or being unrecognised by the international community, or as these institutions are overwhelmed by political or natural emergencies and thus unable to protect and provide for citizens of the state. However, not only is it necessary to look for effects on the state and governance system, but also for what influence a CPE might have on what is frequently described as civil society. This is an entity which, according to Harvey (1998: 204), neo-liberals view as a check on the state and indispensable in fostering a market economy, while neo-populists embrace civil society as a way of reaching the grass roots and generating participation by the poor and disempowered.

While the independence and self-determination of nation states is regarded as the foundation for international law and state relationships, during the latter part of the 1990s, following the Rwanda experience, there was a growing concern within the UN over a government’s ability to block international humanitarian intervention if this was not seen to be in favour of that specific state or government. Thus in 1998 the UN Secretary General (1998), in a report to the UN Security Council (SC) (S/1998/883, par.15-16), suggested the following to enable international intervention on ‘humanitarian grounds’ even if a state or a government might not approve of it.

*Access to humanitarian assistance and protection, or humanitarian access, is therefore an essential subsidiary or ancillary right that gives meaning and*

*effect to the core rights of protection and assistance. Humanitarian access...should not be seen as a concession to be granted to humanitarian organisations on an arbitrary basis...[W]here States are unable or unwilling to meet their responsibilities towards refugees and others in conflict situations, the international community should ensure that victims receive the assistance and protection they need to safeguard their lives. Such action should not be regarded as interference in the armed conflict or as an unfriendly act as long as it is undertaken in an impartial and non-coercive manner.*

While this interpretation might be seen as a drastic departure from previous practice, in reality, the argument for a humanitarian intervention has been used in a number of recent interventions, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor and now the latest 'war on terror' in Afghanistan. These military and humanitarian operations, in each case approved by the UN Security Council, have led Woodward (2001) to coin the term 'humanitarian war', and Duffield and Macrae (2001: 269) to suggest that 'humanitarian action is increasingly becoming an integral part of Western governments' strategies to transform conflicts, decrease violence and set the stage for liberal development.'

It is not only the state and its political and administrative structures that are weakened in CPEs, according to Macrae and Zwi, (quoted in Harvey (1998: 203)); civil society and social capital are also badly eroded. Azarya (1988: 8) has traced three civil society disengagement processes that apply to CPEs. These are firstly, a retreat into a parallel economy (subsistence and/or black market); secondly, traditional structures and authority regaining force as familiar bases in which people seek protection from the instability and arbitrariness of state channels; and thirdly, the reinforcement of narrower bases of community solidarity (village, family, ethnic, religious). Harvey (1998: 206-207), pointing out that CPEs obviously undermine civil society, has identified three key ways in which a civil society is affected:

- 1) Displacement splits up families and communities, so that they can no longer draw on reciprocal networks.
- 2) The looting of assets results in an overall lack of resources within a community, undermining exchange and support networks.
- 3) Dehumanising acts by the military which target families and communities destroy the social fabric.

In sum, Harvey suggests (1998: 208) that such situations produce five interlinked processes affecting civil society:

- An extreme process of disengagement of civil society from the state.
- A fallback on primary groupings within civil society. Kinship, tribal, religious and traditional political structures serve as coping strategies for people in response to the state's collapse.
- Military strategies, extreme scarcity and displacement serve to undermine civil society.
- Predatory local authorities continue to contest the space occupied by civil society, moving into the parallel economy and attempting to create support by drawing on neo-patrimonial ties based on ethnicity.

- Civil society remains strong at a local level, both in the parallel economy and in traditional institutions.

However, whilst these might be common features, it is important to acknowledge the considerable diversity that distinguishes those countries and societies defined as CPEs. Presently large regions (such as the Great Lakes in Africa), and large and diverse countries, often home to many cultures, ethnicities and religions, are commonly defined as one complex political emergency.

That would in turn imply the need for a diversified approach to identifying the needs of people living within or fleeing or returning to areas defined as complex emergencies or complex political, prolonged or protracted emergencies, since the situation is likely to vary considerably within such large geographical areas. The more general a term is made, the more easily it fits all types of situation; but the less useful it becomes in such situations as an analytical tool for understanding the role of the state, its administration, opposing political and military groups and, not least, civil society; and so less useful for more detailed planning for humanitarian interventions.

### 1.3. Humanitarian Assistance in CPEs

It appears that humanitarian assistance in complex political emergencies is frequently associated with the provision of emergency relief aid, although the conflict might have been ongoing for years and people living within the CPE defined areas might have very diverse needs. According to Munslow and Brown (1999: 209) '[T]he conventional wisdom has been that relief operations involving internal conflicts should be dealt with in the same way as natural disasters such as famine and flood', leaving the 'politics' out of it; and for planning 'the normal pattern was a relief phase of six months, a rehabilitation phase lasting for half a year to two years followed by a medium-term reconstruction phase lasting several years.' These quotes highlight the need for a review of which type of assistance is required and appropriate to provide in CPEs, and whether the humanitarian agencies involved are capable and willing to respond to the actual needs of the intended beneficiaries, or are limited by their mandates and/or driven by the interests of their donors.

A note should be made for this thesis on how the terms humanitarian assistance and humanitarian aid are applied, as both terms are in frequent and interchangeable use in NGO parlance. Humanitarian aid is here understood as a rather narrow definition of provision of relief commodities (i.e. food, water, shelter, medicines) provided in emergency situations. Humanitarian assistance is applied for a broader range of assistance initiatives, including humanitarian aid, but where also efforts to i.e. prevent a humanitarian disaster, humanitarian mine action, capacity building and protection schemes should be included.

According to Forman (1999: 20) donors frequently 'surrender to the temptation to design recovery programs with little recipient input – and to deliver aid through their own implementing agencies and service providers rather than through local actors, who alone can ensure the sustainability of the effort.' Even a major donor such as the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission (ECHO) (1996:4)

acknowledges this dilemma, arguing that '[T]he international response to chronic crisis in particular may risk reflecting the organisational and political priorities of implementing agencies, rather than the need of war affected populations and the vulnerability of those threatened by war.'

### 1.3.1. The Continuum Debate

Within academia there has been a long-lasting debate on 'links', 'continuum' and 'contiguity', initiated by a UN General Assembly Resolution (1991). This contains a section on the 'Continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development' which states:

*40. Emergency assistance must be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Development assistance organisations of the United Nations system should be involved at an early stage and should collaborate closely with those responsible for emergency relief and recovery, within their existing mandates.*

*41. International cooperation and support for rehabilitation and reconstruction should continue with sustained intensity after the initial relief stage. The rehabilitation phase should be used as an opportunity to restructure and improve facilities and services destroyed by emergencies in order to enable them to withstand the impact of future emergencies.*

Within academia Buchanan-Smith (1994) provided a useful contribution to this debate, dedicating an issue of the IDS Bulletin to a deliberation on the subject, while the discussion continued within the UN system as to whether there really was such a 'seamless' transition between the different stages that it could be termed a 'continuum'. The UN Inter Agency Standing Committee addressed the issue in 1995, articulating a unified UN policy through the document 'Building Bridges between Relief and Development, Policy Document' (1995), in which it was stated in more general terms that '[S]aving livelihoods in an emergency demands immediate re-focusing of pre-crisis development activities to address the consequences of the crisis, prevent further deterioration and strengthen the foundations for reconciliation.' Furthermore, a report from the UN Secretary General (1996: para. 27) to the UN Economical and Social Council provided further clarity to the debate, questioning the linear continuum argument and rather arguing that:

*The relationship between relief and development activities has for some time been recognized as one which is not necessarily sequential. Relief and development activities proceed often at the same time, each therefore having an impact upon the other. Recognition of the limitations of the paradigm of a linear continuum was reflected in recent debates in governing boards and this recognition has given rise to the need to review the funding arrangements for relief and development activities.*

However, as White and Cliffe (2000: 317-318) note 'the various UN organisations subscribed wholeheartedly to the linking principle in one form or another, welcoming it as an opportunity to justify an expanded mandate covering as many of the aforementioned roles as could credibly be claimed.' The same strategies, according to these authors, applied to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and a number of NGOs with 'dual mandates' for

relief and development who ‘pursued relief/development/peace-building links or synergies wherever possible.’ When the IFRC and eight larger NGOs developed the Code of Conduct (IFRC 1994: para. 8) it contained a paragraph on this subject, which subsequently has gained importance among NGOs as an increasing number has signed up to the code.

*Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs. All relief actions affect the prospects for long term development, either in a positive or negative fashion. Recognising this, we will strive to implement relief programmes which actively reduce the beneficiaries’ vulnerability to future disasters and which create sustainable lifestyles. We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will endeavour to minimise the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long term beneficiaries dependency upon external aid.*

Interestingly, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while rejecting the continuum thinking, argues that diverse and coexisting forms of emergency relief, rehabilitation work and development assistance ‘interact in innumerable ways’. Thus their main concern, expressed in the Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) Guidelines for Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation (OECD 1997: 32), relates to how assistance is to be organised, whereas, from their point of view, the major challenge ‘is to overcome the functional distinctions of the various agencies involved and to integrate, rather than merely co-ordinate, relief, rehabilitation and development objectives within a framework of a long-term strategy.’ Or in other words, the OECD seems to be of the view that a coordinated approach will not overcome differences in organisational mandates, priorities and approaches, but rather that a more solid framework, theoretically and practically, must be in place if humanitarian actors are to overcome their inherited weaknesses.

### **1.3.2. Gaps and Linkage Model**

With the rejection of the continuum model, and its idea of a smooth and linear transition from relief via rehabilitation to development, a ‘gaps and linkage model’ came in as a replacement, largely to inform the UNHCR- and the World Bank-driven Brooking Process. This model, according to a study undertaken by the Danish Agency for Development Assistance (DANIDA) (2001:15) ‘incorporates the idea of “scaling up” relief activities from community towards national level in order to contribute to reconciliation, democratisation and the development of sustainable social and physical infrastructure.’ This could include the development and extension of national systems (i.e. health and education) and channelling relief through government agencies. Underlying criticism of this model, which inevitably can provide a more sustainable national system both for provision of relief and in the national development process, is the fear that it might legitimise governments violating fundamental human rights. Thus, if aid is linked to political conditionality and withheld if governments do not meet international standards, the humanitarian imperative to help populations in need may be jeopardised. Arguably, there is a lesser role for NGOs in this model if they are not accepted by the national

government as partners in relief operations or selected as service providers or facilitators of rehabilitation and development processes.

While both international organisations and NGOs adopted their approaches to allow for a wider range of funding, rather than engaging in a debate on the different aid modalities and mandates, realising that ‘development and relief activities can be similar, or even the same at the field level’ (ibid.), certain academic circles adopted a more critical approach to the issues.

If we revert to the initial discussion on definitions of complex emergencies, contributions from Duffield (1994; 1997; 1998; 2000; 2001); Macrae and Bradbury (1998); Duffield and Macrae (2001) and Macrae and Leader (2001) were all critiquing both the simplicity of the debate, and the possibility that aid would be used as a political rather than a humanitarian tool. As White and Cliffe (2000: 320) observe from this discourse, ‘development programming in ongoing CPEs jeopardises core principles of humanitarian action – humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence – since, unlike relief, it necessarily involves working through authorities (state or non-state), which are often party to the conflict.’ Or as DANIDA (2001: 16) soberly reminds us ‘it should be recognised that the main hindrance to overcoming the negative effects of relief to affected populations are political and military’, the core elements of what differentiates an emergency or a disaster, or a series of such, from a CPE.

Another dimension to this discourse is added by Ofstad, Suhrke et. al. (1999) who, in a review of Danish Humanitarian Assistance in the period 1992-98, makes a distinction between when a conflict enters into a protracted phase ‘with no peace settlement in sight, but with greater routinisation and predictability of events and social transactions.’ In such situations, it is argued, there is a need to exploit the very considerable possibilities for self-reliance (for intended beneficiaries) documented to exist in such situations. The argument propounded is that if agencies simply continue with the provision of humanitarian assistance, as in the early lifesaving phase, and do not pay heed to incentives and opportunities for self-reliance, the assistance can easily create a degree of dependency ‘that is detrimental to people’s dignity and ability to manage their own lives.’

The debate on these subjects is still lively; recent issues of *Disasters and Third World Quarterly* (2001 and 2002) feature articles on these subjects and one must expect the debate to be more influenced by empirical lessons, as more research is conducted in and on complex political emergencies. However, a warning note from Munslow and Brown (1999) might be worth quoting, as they ask ‘[I]s the “disaster continuum” that is talked about simply prolonging emergencies, with different groups playing off against each other for access to humanitarian aid?’

### **1.3.3. Differentiating Between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development**

Nevertheless, for this thesis, and to enable a more practical and nuanced debate, there is a need to establish what might constitute the difference between relief and reconstruction and development efforts. A starting point is a definition of relief and development to establish the boundaries of this discourse; a description provided by



DANIDA (2001:14) seems appropriate, explaining that relief is associated with ‘temporary lifesaving measures, disbursed rapidly by agencies operating directly in communities with little impact on the permanent structures of state institutions and society’.

By contrast, according to DANIDA development is ‘associated with the generation of long-term planning measures in stable, welfare-like states, where carefully negotiated actions would have a bearing on the social, economic and political structures of the given country.’ The wide and possibly overlapping areas between relief and development, described with recourse to words beginning with ‘r’ and frequently referred to as reconstruction and rehabilitation activities, are difficult to distinguish between but are often just seen as a bridge or a process between better known and defined terms, such as ‘relief’ and ‘development’ (White 2000: 322 and Harvey 1998: 202).

However, researchers at the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) have invested considerable time in exploring and discussing differences in these terms. This has lead to a description of rehabilitation efforts in post-conflict situations (Barakat, Evans et al. 2001: 59-63) as ‘the process of supporting conflict affected communities (displaced and others) to organise themselves and start to gain control over their environment, participating in the provision of aid and the improvements of services.’ Reconstruction, on the other hand,

*(..).should be seen as the first step in a long-term recovery process. The term is used interchangeably to indicate: the restoration of the physical infrastructure and essential government functions and services; institution building to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing institutions; and, the structural reform of the political, economic, social, and security sectors. Reconstruction involves economic, social and psychological readjustment.*

Thus, while rehabilitation is presented as a more community-organised activity, reconstruction is more set on re-establishing and developing governmental functions for these to be able to take the lead in the wider recovery process. While there is an inherited weakness in this argument, as it hinges on an assumption that there is a relatively well functioning governmental structure, the PRDU argues for adoption of the more inclusive term, reconstruction and development, which certainly requires a stable government, if the definition of development as provided by DANIDA is acceptable. However, drawing on experience from a range of countries, the PRDU has developed the following matrix to mark the difference between this form of humanitarian activity and relief (see Table 1 below).

While this matrix does provide a certain distinction between the different types of assistance, it seems necessary to seek further insight into the ‘grey areas’ between these two types of assistance or where the forced migrants might have needs within both categories, or certainly, needs that might change as they move from flight, refugee/internally displaced persons (IDP) situations and then to return and resettlement. Although, as DANIDA (2001: 17) points out, for practical or funding reasons ‘in the field, organisations do not, in practise, distinguish between relief and development.’

	<b>Relief</b>	<b>Reconstruction and Development</b>
<b>Aim</b>	Saving lives	Restoring livelihoods
<b>Timescale</b>	Short-term	Long-term
<b>Decision-making</b>	Top-down	Bottom-up
<b>Implementation</b>	Centralized	Decentralized
<b>Data needed</b>	Quantitative and rapid	Qualitative, quantitative and cumulative data
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	Passive recipients	Active participants
<b>Local Governance</b>	Limited delivery function	Leading role in initiating, planning, implementing and supervising programmes through a collaborative structure of local governance  The development capacity building opportunities
<b>Mobilisation of resources</b>	Quick donor response on humanitarian basis	Development of medium and long-term strategic planning
<b>Type of interventions</b>	Standard interventions	Tailor-made, multi-dimensional and diverse needs-based activities recognizing people's capacities
<b>Nature of subsidy</b>	Consumption	Investment
<b>Media profile</b>	High	Low
<b>Sustainability</b>	Rapid withdrawal of relief	Empowering local organizations & systems of governance

*Table 1: Relief Versus Reconstruction and Development*

*Source: Barakat, Evans and Strand, 2001*

### 1.3.4. Funding Labels

Why then is there such a strict division between the different categories, while at the same time such a lack of clarity between and within each of these subdivisions which are part of the wider term 'humanitarian assistance'? Certainly, the planning and funding horizons of the aid agencies and their donors seem to be an important factor in the labelling of these different types of activity, not least because there are different procedures and degrees of bureaucratic handling for each. For an emergency project, it will generally be a prerequisite that the decision-making process is expedited as funds need to be allocated within a very short time frame in order to be of much use. On the other hand, for a development programme speed is of less importance than the inclusion of stakeholders in the process, thereby ensuring a larger degree of ownership and the possibility of coordination with a wider range of development activities.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation projects often tend to be labelled as emergency relief, in recognition that the time frame needed for the more elaborate reconstruction of a society following a conflict is more likely to be 5 to 10 years. Donors most frequently apply a 3, 6 or 12 month planning horizon when funding humanitarian assistance in complex political emergencies; consequently, the international labelling

of the given situation, country or region is of utmost importance. Under the terms of the UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) that it administers and applies to all countries and regions defined as CPEs (which includes both UN agency and NGO projects), the UN's OCHA operates on a one-year time frame, even if there is a very clear understanding from all actors that the needs of the population in these CPEs cannot be met in only one year. An example illustrative of this is funding for Humanitarian Mine Activities (HMA) activities, often defined as a prerequisite for refugee and IDP repatriation and resettlement. Whilst it is recognised that such activities will take a number of years to be completed, it is usually defined as part of an emergency project or a rehabilitation activity.

This would lead to the conclusion that the various definitions applied to humanitarian activities in CPEs are not necessarily useful for understanding the actual context of the given CPE, but rather are tools for humanitarian agencies and donors to facilitate their planning and funding processes. This points towards an observation made by DANIDA (2001: 19) in the discussion of models for understanding CPEs, and the need for clear definition of the types and phases in violent conflicts influencing the

identification of needs and appropriate responses, which concluded that:

- No single model can capture the variations of difficult, violent conflicts.
- Linear cause-effect models are not able to account for variations in violent conflicts; the interaction between factors at community, transnational, national and international levels define the form and dynamics of conflicts.
- Given the complexity of these phenomena, it is very difficult to anticipate the consequences of specific interventions, or combinations of interventions.

While this study attempted to develop a new analytical framework, based on a conceptual notion of human security, in the end they acknowledge that their model failed to allow for the development of a typology of violent conflict, and only identified critical gaps in the international aid response (DANIDA) (2001: 21). Leaving theory development to the peril of the complexity of the situations it attempts to understand and describe, in the end the distinct 'complexity' of each situation, rather than what might be more universal commonalities of all complex political emergencies, is what needs to be sought out to enable a proper humanitarian response.

#### 1.4. Defining Forced Migration

Having discussed various elements of the complexity of a CPE there is a need to investigate what happens to people caught within or fleeing from such emergencies, particularly those who feel forced to flee their livelihoods and become migrants. As will be discussed below, forced migration has become a major humanitarian challenge for the international community, as more than 100 million people have felt forced to migrate over the last decade. For them the label is less of academic interest than is the fact that by being acknowledged as a 'forced migrant' the migrants might actually be entitled to humanitarian assistance, protection and, in due course, support

for their repatriation and reintegration. However, to enable a discourse on forced migration in, or as a result of, complex political emergencies there is a need to define the term, to indicate the scope of the problem and then identify which of the migrants might be eligible for humanitarian support according to international conventions.

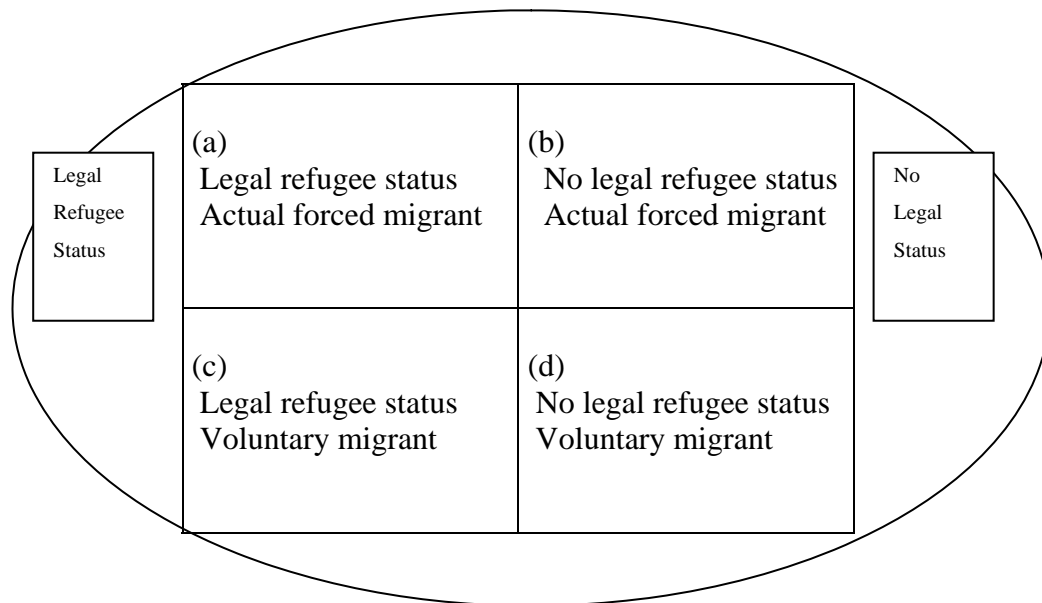
#### 1.4.1. Migration

According to Papastergiadis (2000: 10) ‘there are more people living in places that are outside their homeland than at any previous point in history’. He quotes figures of 100 million international migrants and 27 million stateless refugees, but, at the same time, cautions that there are no reliable records of illegal migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that from the early days of history people have moved, voluntarily or as the result of force. Both the Bible and the Koran provide telling examples of how individuals and large groups left their habitat due to war, natural disasters or fear of persecution (Ferris 1993: xxvi-xxxv). Colonialism led to the forced movement of approximately 10 million slaves from Africa to the Americas from 1500 to 1850, while more than 25 million Britons settled in the colonies between 1815 and 1925 (Papastergiadis 2000: 7). Both Australia and the United States of America are examples of countries largely inhabited by migrants, whilst more than 70 % of the workforce in Saudi Arabia and 90 % in the United Arab Emirates are non-nationals.

According to the definition provided by Demuth (2000: 26) ‘[M]igration is the action taken by *migrants* as they move from one geographic point to another geographic point’. Referring to international law, he distinguishes between voluntary movements and involuntary or forced movements, including trespassing of state borders. This differentiation between forced and voluntary migration is a central element in migration studies, but, as many researchers point out, it is increasingly difficult to differentiate whether migrants have in fact had a real choice to move or to stay. Marfleet (1998: 71) postulates that ‘[D]ifferentiation between “economic migrants”, “refugees” and others become meaningful only for those most determined to perpetuate systems of exclusion.’ Within the study of sociology, Harpviik (1997), drawing on Tilly (1990: 88), mentions that one of the few clear examples of purely coerced migrants was that of the captured African slaves. Consequently Harpviik argues that when seeking sociological explanations, voluntary and forced migration are more accurately regarded as poles on a continuum.

When countries decide to close their borders and deny access to both forced and what are frequently defined as economic migrants, these might, irrespective of their rights according to international law, end up as internally displaced in their country of origin. Furthermore, as Van Heer (2000: 90) argues, migrants often shift between the different migration categories. Such a view is supported by Martin (2000: 3), who claims that the different categories of forced migrants are not mutually exclusive as ‘victims of humanitarian emergencies may belong to more than one group, either at the same time or in close sequence’, and where ‘[S]tatus also changes over time and in ways that differ according to the policies of receiving countries.’ There are also cases identified in which migrants, despite international recognition of their right to be defined as refugees and so be eligible for assistance, do not wish to apply for

refugee status in the country granting them asylum.<sup>3</sup> A presentation of the possible variations in refugee status of forced and voluntary migrants is outlined below in Box 1.



**Box 1:** Legal Versus Actual Status of Forced Migrants

**Source:** Barakat and Strand, 2000

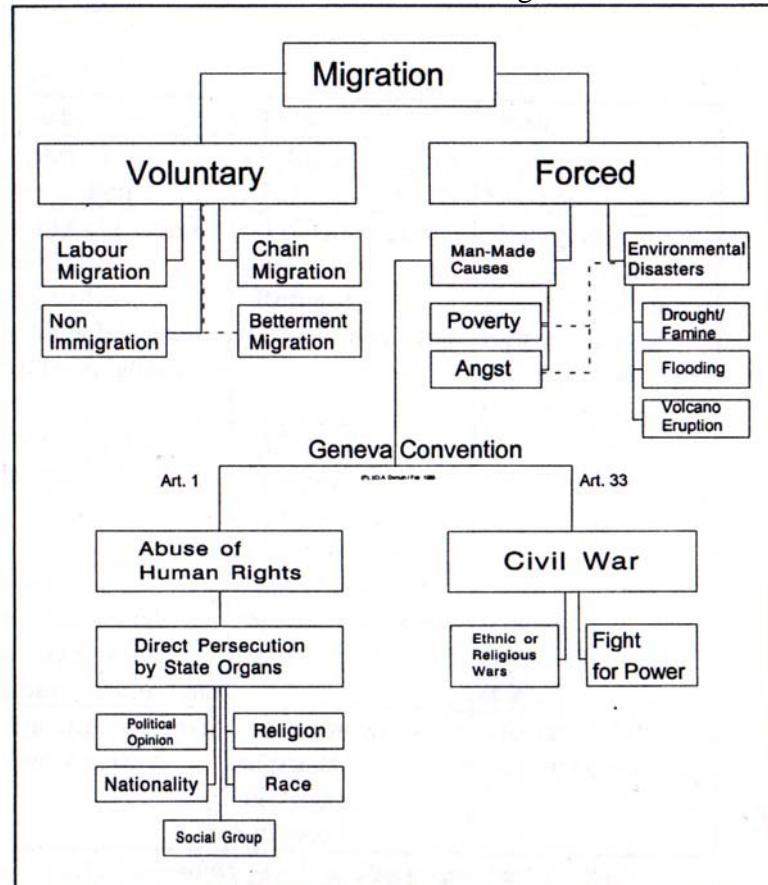
#### 1.4.2. Forced Migration

The Norwegian Research Council (NRC) (1994) defines the concept ‘forced migration’, for the purpose of their research programme, as basically referring to ‘movements of a significant number of people from areas or countries where national authorities and communities are unwilling or unable to provide for the protection of their fundamental human rights and/or their basic human needs.’ The Council further widens understanding of the reasons for flight, stating that ‘the most appropriate linkage is not between population movements and poverty but with the idea of development more broadly defined, including environmental change, socio-political pressures and conflicts.’ (NRC 1994: 7)

Demuth (2000) observes that ‘not every migrant is a refugee, but every refugee is a – forced – migrant.’ To differentiate between voluntary and forced migration he presents a diagram (see Box 2 on next page) outlining the two categories, illustrating that in ‘man-made disasters’ there is provision within the Geneva Convention to assist the victims of the disaster. This provision mandates and enables the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide assistance in accordance with articles 1 and 33 of the Convention, which thus can include internally displaced persons (IDPs). Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2000) has categorised two types of forced migrant. These are *refugees*, forced migrants who cross internationally recognised

<sup>3</sup> This example is derived from personal communication with Dr. Sultan Barakat, March 2000.

borders and thus are eligible for protection and refugee status under the 1951 Convention Relating to Refugees;<sup>4</sup> and *internally displaced people* (IDPs), forced migrants who move within the international borders of a country.<sup>5</sup> The latter group were recognised as *people of concern* by the UNHCR in 1994, but without the same internationally recognised right to claim protection and assistance that a *refugee* holds. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, introduced to the United Nations in 1998, however, outline the rights of internally displaced persons and the obligations of home governments, non-state actors and international organisations towards them. These guidelines are not a binding document (UNHCR 2000), but are based on and consistent with international human rights law and humanitarian law.<sup>6</sup>



**Box 2:** Forced Versus Voluntary Migration

**Source:** Demuth, A. 2000

<sup>4</sup> A refugee is a person 'who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country', the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>5</sup> '(...) internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.' UNOCHA, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement at [http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/idp\\_gp/idp.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/idp_gp/idp.html)

<sup>6</sup> An OCHA document, 'An Easy Reference to International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law', gives a more comprehensive presentation of these laws and their application in conflict situations.

Over recent years, as observed by Suhrke and Zolberg (1999: 169), the UNHCR has attempted to play a leading role in international policy discourse in defining a ‘comprehensive refugee policy’. The argument forwarded by UNHCR is that refugee problems are not simply humanitarian in nature, but need to be dealt with within a political process where the underlying causes creating refugee situations need to be addressed. This has, according to these authors, brought about a more pragmatic approach, in which ‘refugee problems can and should be modified through better conflict management.’

## 1.5. The Scale of Forced Migration

There is no clear agreement on the actual number of forced migrants and different organisations present different figures. Crisp (1999) pinpoints the difficulty for UNHCR, as one of two authoritative organisations presenting overviews of displaced populations. He argues that collecting accurate and consistent refugee statistics is not so much a technical matter, but rather encounters a different kind of difficulty ‘because of the way they impinge upon the interests of host countries, countries of origin, humanitarian agencies and other actors’. Pointing to the complexity of many emergencies he suggests that it is very difficult for the UNHCR to distinguish between ‘refugees’, ‘returnees’, ‘internally displaced people’ and ‘local residents’. He concludes (1994: 4) ‘and even if such distinctions can be made in strictly legal terms, they are irrelevant in terms of human needs and humanitarian assistance.’ Table 2 present ‘people of concern’ to the UNHCR, divided by region and category.

Region	Refugees	Asylum Seekers	Returned Refugees	IDPs and Others of Concern	Total
<b>Africa</b>	3,523,250	61,100	933,890	1,732,290	<b>6,250,540</b>
<b>Asia</b>	4,781,750	24,750	617,620	1,884,740	<b>7,308,860</b>
<b>Europe</b>	2,608,380	473,060	952,060	3,252,300	<b>7,285,800</b>
<b>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</b>	61,200	1,510	6,260	21,200	<b>90,170</b>
<b>North America</b>	636,300	605,630	-	-	<b>1,241,930</b>
<b>Oceania</b>	64,500	15,540	-	-	<b>80,040</b>

**Table 2:** *People of Concern to the UNHCR, 2000*<sup>7</sup>

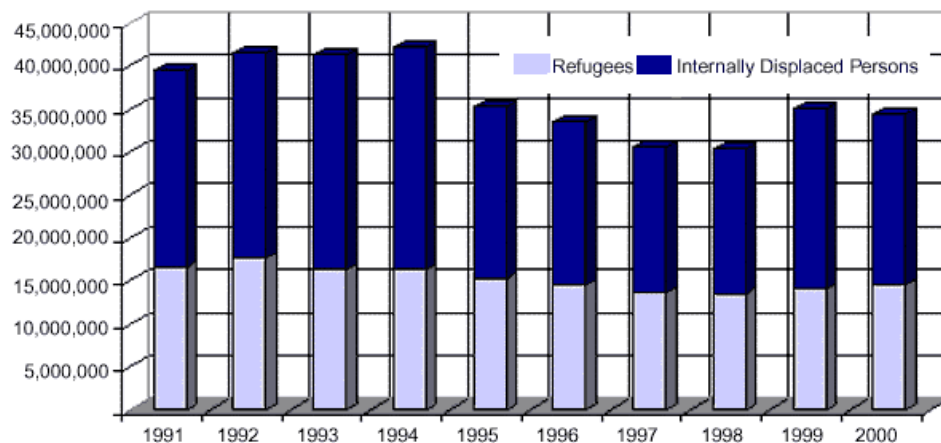
**Source:** UNHCR, 2001

The total number of people of concern to the UNHCR (2001) was, for 2000, given as 22.3 million, including 11.7 million refugees and 6.9 million IDPs, but, as UNHCR emphasises, not all IDPs fall within their mandate. The US Committee for Refugees (2001) set the numbers much higher, at 14.5 million refugees and between 20 to 25 million IDPs. The Global IDP Survey (2001) presents a more accurate estimate of

<sup>7</sup> These numbers exclude 3.2 million Palestinian refugees supported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

IDPs, ranging between 22.9 and 23.9 million.<sup>8</sup> OCHA (2001) sets the number of IDPs at 50 million worldwide, 'of which 25-30 million have lost their homes due to conflict.' OCHA, however, doesn't provide any sources or details for the numbers they present. A large group of forcibly displaced people is, moreover, those displaced or resettled by infrastructural development projects. According to Cernea and McDowell (2000: 2) between 90 and 100 million poor and vulnerable people have been displaced and resettled 'under the wings of progress' over the last 10 years by 'development programmes that are supposed to widely improve living standards.'

Despite differences in figures there is a common agreement among agencies that the numbers of internally displaced have increased over recent years. OCHA argues that the number of IDPs displaced by conflict increased 'nearly 25 % in 1999' (2001). The US Committee for Refugees (USCR) (2001) sets the increase at '3 million in the past 3 years'. A survey of total numbers of displaced, which then includes all categories and cover the period from 1991 to 2000, is presented below in Box 3.



**Box 3:** Number of Refugees and IDPs, 1991-2000

**Source:** US Committee for Refugees, 2001

Another characteristic of the refugee situation, documented by the US Committee for Refugees, is the predominance of forced migrants settled in poorer and/or less developed countries. Half of the world's refugees have fled to one of the following five countries/territories: Pakistan, Iran, Jordan, Gaza/West Bank and Tanzania. The largest groups of uprooted people come from Afghanistan and Palestine, each with 4 million displaced, while there are 40 countries with internal displacement above 10,000 displaced. Refugee statistics reveal that many migrants are forced to stay on in their refuge location, abroad or in their homeland, for extended periods of time – for the Palestinians, more than 50 years; for the Afghans nearly 25 years for some of those who left earliest. Moreover, displacement in Sudan, Angola, Colombia, Congo-Kinshasa, Burma, Turkey, Indonesia, Iraq, Burundi and Sri Lanka accounts for two-thirds of the world's internally displaced people. Many of these countries are themselves dependent on foreign assistance. Marfleet (1998: 72) quotes Widgren's statement that '[T]he world's refugee burden is carried by the poorest nations: the 20 nations with the highest ratio of refugees have an annual per capita income of only \$

<sup>8</sup> Figures updated July 2001.



700.’ Marfleet further argues (1998: 74) that these refugees ‘survive as marginals: tolerated but on the edge of societies...’

Turning to voluntary repatriation: there is a significant discrepancy between figures provided by UNHCR and USCR. The latter states that 2.5 million have been repatriated over the last three years, with 650 000 in the year 2000. UNHCR, however, claim that in 1999 alone they assisted 2.5 million returnees. Based on figures from USCR, Preston (1999: 19) estimates a dramatic increase in involuntary repatriation from December 1994 to December 1996, jumping from 7 to 40 %.

Despite Crip’s warning on the accuracy of the figures for refugees and the difficulties with verification of IDP numbers, it seems evident that the large majority of forced migrants today are Muslims, internally displaced within their own country, and therefore not protected by international law to the same degree as if they had become refugees. Equally, a large number are annually on the move back to their homes, either through voluntary repatriation or because they have been expelled from their host countries. However, there is no valid documentation of the scale and type of the various forms of forced repatriation, and one can assume that large groups of people go undocumented and unnoticed by refugee agencies.<sup>9</sup>

The issue that always will be contested, despite diagrams and definitions, is the question of who, whether a person or institution, is mandated to decide if a person is to be defined as a forced or a voluntary migrant. The power of such decisions must not be underestimated since for many refugees this will mark the difference between being granted asylum in a secure country, or even a temporary permit to stay there; and being returned as an illegal immigrant.

## 1.6. Migration Theories

It is therefore interesting to note the importance placed on migration, and migrants’ rights to asylum and voluntary return, in international politics and in research. The research focus appears to have changed over time, influenced by what Ferris (1993: xvii) describes as the ‘political violence which pervades the contemporary world’, although within political science Hollifield (2000: 137) argues that there has been a paucity of theorising about what he defines as the ‘politics of international migration.’

One explanation for the low demand for such studies could be provided by Cuny and Stein (1992: 7), who highlight the influence of the Cold War period in this regard. They observe that, until the end of the Cold War, it was not a popular notion in the West that people might actually wish to return to the Eastern block or socialist countries, although, during the same period, as noted by Demuth (2000: 28), Germany made a political decision to accept all migrants from Eastern Europe as politically persecuted. He argues that while many western governments found migration issues to be of secondary importance in the early 1970s, restrictions were imposed on types of migrants from the later part of that decade and onwards,

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<sup>9</sup> Afghanistan is a valid case in point. Due to budgetary restrictions UNHCR closed down their registration point for returning refugees at the Afghan/Iranian border for several months during 1999.

following the economic recession. Thus, 'Geastarbeitern', as they were termed, were no longer welcome in Germany and other European countries. With significant and prolonged refugee situations emerging during the late 1980s and early 1990s Western governments were reluctant to allow these large groups of refugees access, and a new concept was introduced of 'assisting the refugees close to home'. The argument forwarded by politicians and humanitarian organisations alike was that there would be fewer cultural differences, it would be less expensive and repatriation would be more easily facilitated.<sup>10</sup>

In a critical review of recent European asylum practice Marfleet (1998: 83) argues that not only have many countries closed their borders, but they also intervene in refugee-producing countries by 'using UNHCR and other NGOs as regulatory bodies.' As for the role of NGOs he observes that their 'role as "gatekeepers" within the rights network is increasingly that of keeping potential openings to the west firmly shut.' A comment from Demuth (2000), discussing the massive outmigration from Europe that lasted until the 1960s, sums this up astutely: '[Y]et it still smacks of European arrogance that what "we" did a good 250 years is supposed to be acceptable, if not even heroic, while this option with "us" as the target countries is decried as "economic refugeeism".' Or, as Suhrke and Zolberg (1999: 170) conclude, '[T]he premise of a "comprehensive" refugee policy is that foreign and refugee policies are deliberately and closely interrelated.' The Australian rejection in August 2001 of a group of immigrants rescued at sea not only illustrates the above point but also serves as a good illustration of how fear of immigration is used to raise political support during a national election campaign.

Theory development on migration seems strongly influenced by these changing political realities. Ferris (1993: xvii) argues that, in general, refugees and displaced people have been paid less attention by political scientists because they have regarded migration as marginal to the central processes of international politics. According to Harpviken (1997: 10) there were limited theoretical reflections on refugee and forced migration issues up to the early 1980s, and Suhrke (1995: 201) attributes this to a general absence of such discourse on the global agenda.

There are different approaches to describing migration theory and how it has developed. One is a division, and comparison, between the approaches taken by different academic disciplines. Brettell and Hollifield (2000: 3) illustrate the diversity and a notable lack of interdisciplinary coherence through listing the dominant theories in the various disciplines.<sup>11</sup> Ferris (1993: xviii-xxiv), in an attempt at bridging the discipline discussion, lists five principal theoretical approaches taken in forced migration studies: 1) uprooted people as a humanitarian/emergency issue; 2) refugees and migrants as a foreign policy/security issue; 3) uprooted people as a human rights issue; 4) uprooted people and development; 5) uprooted people as an international systemic issue. She, however, argues that each of these approaches grew out of a particular set of circumstances. That argument is in line with a generally agreed argument for dividing migration studies into separate generations,

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<sup>10</sup> In Norway the Norwegian Refugee Council used this as a fundraising slogan.

<sup>11</sup> The study includes anthropology, demography, economics, history, law, political science and sociology.

responding to changes in international politics, and thus to be discussed in more detail in the following part of this chapter.

What is termed the first generation of migration studies is largely influenced by the writing of Lee (1966). Lee introduced what later came to be known as the 'push' and 'pull' theories of migration, where for forced migration it was assumed that only 'push' factors were relevant. Kunz (1973) added to this with his 'kinetic model' in which he makes a distinction between anticipated and acute refugee movements. These models, labelled by Papastergiadis (2000: 30) as 'voluntarist,' are questioned by a range of writers. Harpviken (1997: 11) notes that they fail 'to explain why some people do not flee', while Phizackleas, quoted in Papastergiadis (2000: 32), argues that the models remain blind to gender and cultural differences.

Informing these theory developments was the grander 'World Systems Theory' (Wallerstein 1974), which is a theory of social change. It is the view of Harpviken (1997: 11) that this theory drew the attention of researchers to the forces that caused flight, and the process through which these were generated, rather than the internal dynamics of migration. Papastergiadis (2000: 32) highlights the work of Stephen Castle as representative of a more 'structuralist' approach to migration. He applied a model drawn from political economy to explain post-war European movements, where '[M]igration was no longer seen as a "one-off" event, but rather as a dynamic process, whose size and direction were influenced by the dual forces of state regulation and industrial development.' Here migrants were regarded as a 'reserve army of labourers', an explanatory model well known from Marxist theory.

The second generation of theory emerged from the late 1970s as migration issues came more to the forefront of political discourse. As more empirical research took place it provided a larger degree of nuances to the understanding of forced migration. One important reference is the book 'Escape from Violence' (Zolberg, Suhrke et al. 1989), building on studies in a number of refugee locations. The authors distinguish between three ideal categories of refugees, being: 1) activists, whose basic human rights are threatened by reason of their political activity; 2) targets, being members of particular and targeted social, ethnic or religious groups; or, 3) mere victims of societal or international violence (1989: 30). As the name of the book indicates it does look specifically at refugees as a product of political violence. Other typologies of migrants were added later, such as migrants from environmental change and the above-mentioned inclusion by the NRC of developmental failure.

Many have participated in the search for a third generation of migration theory, as more attention has been placed on interdisciplinary efforts (Agozino 2000: xxiii and Brettell and Hollifield 2000: 2), acknowledging the absence of a shared paradigm. Influencing this move might not only be a more general trend of striving for more interdisciplinary effort and interchange; the international situation has undergone similar changes throughout this period. Globalisation is one factor; another is the increasing number of what are frequently termed 'failed states', where the international community's will to uphold respect for national sovereignty, a foundation in international law and relations, has diminished. Such a position would inevitably undermine the Weberian definition of sovereignty, quoted by Hollifield (2000: 141), where a state can exist only if it has a monopoly of the legitimate use of force in a given territorial area and where Hollifield further argues that 'the ability or

inability of a state to control its borders and hence its population must be considered the sine qua non of sovereignty.’ Thus, he squarely brings both migration issues and provision of what is termed cross-border assistance into the wider discussion of the politics of migration.

However, having identified a trend of migration research among some academic disciplines which is more inclusive and open to political and policy change, there is on the other hand a distinct countertrend identified in, for example, the World Bank. Addressing the resettlement of refugees and people displaced due to development projects, Cernea and McDowell (2000: 14-31) postulate a theoretical model for the resettlement of displaced populations, termed the impoverishment risk and reconstruction model (IRR). This model builds upon an understanding of four distinct stages in resettlement processes, being: 1) recruitment; 2) transition; 3) development; 4) incorporation or handing over. The model rests on three fundamental concepts, which are 1) risk; 2) impoverishment; 3) reconstruction. The argument is that these three variables are interlinked and influencing each other, and ‘thus helping to illuminate better the nature, inter linkages, pathologies, and socio-economic remedies’ of the theoretical discourse on resettlement processes. Introducing a very simplistic model of risk deconstruction within a very limited repertoire of risks, the model excludes variables such as political development, interests of the displaced etc. and focuses, rather, on ‘deconstructing the syncretic, multifaceted process of displacement into its identifiable, principal, and most widespread components.’ This, they argue, can then be achieved through turning the risk model on its head, combined with ‘targeted strategies, backed up by adequate financing’.

Such a narrow and technical reconstruction theory might be welcomed by institutions that wish to apply a theoretical superstructure to their rehabilitation efforts, but would, arguably, fall short of adding knowledge and providing insight into migration research, where it is cross-disciplinary research and a focus on variations rather than uniformity that, in theory, is likely to bring about a more desirable result.

## 1.7. Central Themes for Forced Migration Research

Setting the broader theories aside, a number of separate themes have, post 1990, come to the centre of forced migration discourse, enabling a more in-depth review of some central theoretical issues. The in-house journal ‘Forced Migration Review’ of the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford has over the years drawn much-needed attention to a number of forced migration issues. However, in this case, an important starting point would be Bennett's (1998: 11) criticism of IDP research in general (but which arguably could encompass all migration research), in which his major argument is that migrants should be regarded as ‘social actors rather than categories of need.’

Another matter, of particular importance to this dissertation, and building on the above- mentioned concern, is the question of whether setting out on a migration cycle is an individual or a group decision. Among those arguing for individual decision-making is Demuth (2000), although he points out that ‘[T]his might well happen within a group context, or on account of a family council decision.’

According to Bakewell (2000: 108), this view of individual choice is representative of a more neo-classical model of migration, as opposed to a structuralized model where choice is attributed less importance. One who can be seen to represent the latter model is Bennett (1998: 11), when stating that '[I]n many cases flight is not an individual choice, but one made by community leaders.' However, and as both quotations indicate, there might be groups of migrants left with limited possibilities to make individual decisions, such as minors or people with vulnerabilities depending on others' care. Here Indra (1999: 3) gives us a timely reminder that 'most of the world's forced migrants are neither Northern natives nor are they located in Northern countries.' She points out that women especially might have limited influence on decision-making processes in these cultures. Furthermore, there might be situations where individuals are left with limited possibilities to object to group or family decisions. Of particular interest here is the Islamic concept of migration, *hijrah*, as the majority of forced migrants today are, actually, Muslims.

### 1.7.1. Islam's Influence on Migration in the Muslim World

While there are limited sources in English on this subject, and an organisation like UNHCR stresses that they do not keep statistics on the religious belief of the world's refugees,<sup>12</sup> an article by Abu-Sahlieh (1996) examines the subject. He focuses on the term *hijrah* (immigration) which 'is used very often to designate the fact of fleeing from a country governed by the infidels in order to join the Muslim community.' The tradition of *hijrah* is based on the Prophet Mohammed's escape from Mecca in the year 622 A.D., where those who left were termed *muhagirin* (immigrants). Abu-Sahlieh refers to two verses of the Koran, 4:97-98, that 'urge every Muslim living in an infidel country to leave it and join the Muslim community', aiming 'to protect them from persecution, to weaken the infidel community, and to participate in efforts of war of the new community.' However, after Muhammed conquered Mecca in 630 A.D. he 'declared the end of immigration.' These Qu'ranic instructions exhort all Muslims not only to leave a country where they might be persecuted due to their religion, but furthermore to return when such threats were eliminated.

While assuming that most Muslims are aware of such instructions, irrespective of which branch of Islam they belong to, it seems quite remarkable that this subject has been neglected both by scholars and by humanitarian agencies involved in supporting refugees or the internally displaced,<sup>13</sup> not least as one might presume that such insight might ease the prediction of migration patterns and movements, as people are both fleeing and returning to areas mainly inhabited by Muslims.

### 1.7.2. Gender and Migration

Islamic countries have often been referred to when interest has focused on the differences encountered by men and women in refugee situations, with particular

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<sup>12</sup> Personal communication with UNHCR staff, Geneva, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> A UNICEF document from 1985, *Child Care in Islam*, published by UNICEF Cairo, was the only document with explicit reference to Islam found during a review of handbooks for emergency situation management and related policy documents of UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and OCHA.

attention paid to the vulnerability of female refugees and IDPs. UNHCR (2002) presents the situation of refugee women in the following way:

*In any refugee population, approximately 50 percent of the uprooted people are women and girls. Stripped of the protection of their homes, their government and often their family structure, females are often particularly vulnerable. They face the rigours of long journeys into exile, official harassment or indifference and frequent sexual abuse even after reaching an apparent place of safety. Women must cope with these threats while being nurse, teacher, breadwinner and physical protector of their families.*

The same arguments are used for internally displaced women, who, together with children, according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group (undated: 2) comprise ‘the overwhelming majority of IDPs’, with figures as high as 80 % of the total IDP population. The Working Group argue that displacement tends to increase the number of households headed by women, and thus, to change gender roles. They further point out that ‘displacement has different gender impacts in each phase of displacement: from the cause of flight, to considerations of protection and assistance while displaced, to specific problems arising in the resettlement and reintegration phase.’ On a critical note one can argue that if approximately 50 % of the refugee population are women and girls, the same percentage should be attributed to men and boys, and then 80 % of the IDP population would be men and children, as here children, irrespective of their sex, would constitute the largest group. Still, there is ample evidence to support the findings of Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001: 22) that refugee women ‘continue to be discriminated against in situations of armed conflicts, in refugee determinations, and in resettlement because of their gender.’

Consequently a number of agencies have developed guidelines for ensuring an appropriate response to and protection of female migrants: see UNICEF (1998:165), UNHCR (1991) and World Food Programme (WFP) (2000). On a more general basis the UN has established a separate organisation that is to work for women’s empowerment and gender equality,<sup>14</sup> and most organisations, UN agencies and NGOs alike, have prepared guidelines for the integration of gender perspectives into humanitarian assistance (IASC 1999).

However, in relief operations agencies often attempt to reduce the sensitivity of issues relating to women for religious or political reasons. Thus the term gender, implying both men and women, has been applied over recent years, although in practice, gendered assistance would imply assistance ensured to target women. This practice is somehow in contrast to the official definition of gender and gendered assistance and as such can mask important differences, albeit provided with the best of intentions.

Frequently in use are terms such as gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, the first defined by the IASC Working Group (undated:2) as

*...a tool to provide an understanding of how people are socialised from birth to hold certain attitudes and values about what is appropriate behaviour for men and women. These societal expectations are gender constructs, or socially constructed roles, capacities and expectations of men and women, as*

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<sup>14</sup> The organisation is the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

*opposed to their specific biological characteristics based on sexual differences.*

Based on a gender analysis it is expected that agencies ‘mainstream’ their activities ‘to make gender issues an integral part of organisational thinking and practice’ (Chant and Gutman 2000: 6). Much of the foundation for the gender approach rests on work on women in development (WID) initiated at the end of the 1970s, where the aim was to accomplish women’s equality with men. The Gender and Development (GAD) concept was introduced in the 1980s ‘to counteract the marginalisation of WID by integrating gender as a cross-cutting issue in development organisations and interventions.’ A second GAD approach emerged following the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing, which, according to Chant and Gutman (2000: 12), to a larger extent brought human rights and people-centred sustainable development into the discourse. Indra (1999: 17), moreover, acknowledges the surfacing of two separate approaches over recent years. One, which seem to refocus on women rather than applying the wider gender perspective, is termed Women in Forced Migration (WIFM), which she claims has ‘brought to the fore the need to reform discussion and practice in order to put women more centrally into the forced migration picture.’ And in parallel there has been a Gender and Forced Migration (GAFM) approach. Indra expresses doubts as to whether the latter approach could lead to an alteration of the *forced* dimension of migration discourse. Indra argues that not only are a majority of the world’s forced migrants, at least temporarily, unable to control key dimensions of their existence, but those who have been set to deal with forced migrants are placed in a position of power over these individuals. Thus, she argues, the forced migrants are ‘unequally located in structures of interpretation, representation, decision-making, policy generation and programme delivery’ (1998: 18).

Her principal argument is that ‘one should not assume that the increased use of the term “gender” in forced migration circles means that there now exists a broad based commitment to further gender practical programming’ (Indra 1998: 20). Moreover, she suggests the adoption of a new GIFM approach and (despite using the gender term) she advocates the establishment of projects directly targeting women. FIFM, which can be described as a feminist approach, is contrasted by an opposite strategy, as advocated by Chant and Gutman (2000), of rather striving to mainstream men into the GID framework. Here, again, the gender discourse resembles the more classical divisions, traditionally influencing discourse on women’s development, between a ‘negotiated’ and evolutionary gender balanced approach and a more ‘revolutionary’ approach mainly intended to root development programming primarily in what can be identified as the interests of women. But then, in line with the point raised by Indra, in the end the question is: which women should be the ones to articulate the interests of the forced migrants, given the restrictions imposed on them?

### **1.7.3. A Complex Migration Circle**

One feature of migration literature is the predominant focus on outward migration, rather than on the entire migration process that migrants might go through, which could include repatriation, resettlement or remigration. Agozino (2000: 30-50) serves as a prominent example of this trend; his migration model consists of four phases:

decision making; migration; arrival; and staying abroad. Only a few researchers have focused on the second leg of the migration movement, what Hammond (1999) describes as the multiple Rs.<sup>15</sup> Repatriation and resettlement issues were first brought into prominence by the end of the 1980s by Fred Cuny (1989; Cuny and Stein 1992).

A decade later, Black and Koser (1999) provided a range of case studies to illustrate the complexity of migration issues related to repatriation and reconstruction. Cernea and McDowell (2000), also drawing on a range of cases, address the issue of refugee return and resettlement specifically following development-induced displacement.

The repatriation stages, and which choices the migrants are confronted with, both on a day-to-day basis while returning and resettling and in the longer run after their return, seem particularly understudied. One must assume that migrants go through a range of decision-making processes and are faced with a number of unforeseen challenges in the period from when they decide to, or are forced to, return and until they either integrate in the host community, are resettled or decide to, or are forced to, again leave their ancestral home or home area. This process will necessarily follow the same phases as Agozino identified for the outward migration, which can be suggested as:

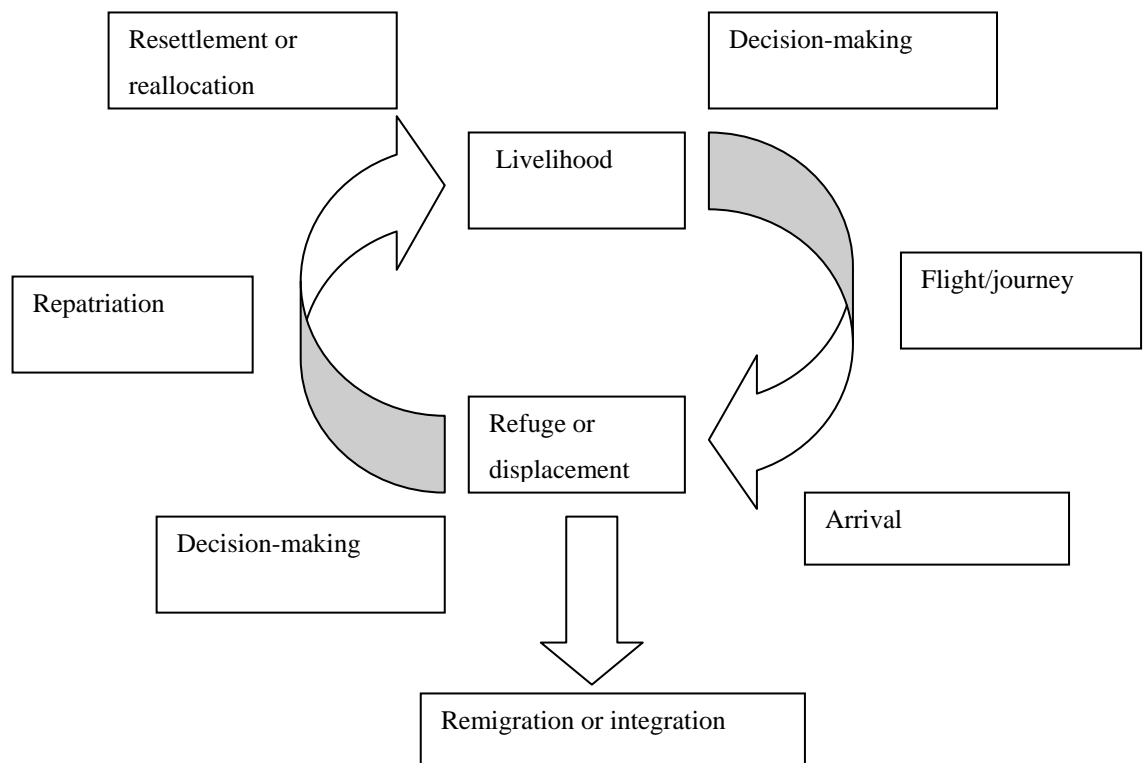
- Decision making and preparation.
- Repatriation.
- Resettlement.
- Re-establishment (or eventually a decision to leave again).

Below in Box 4 is a schematic illustration of the various stages of the migration cycle, expanding on the five essential components of migration movements identified by Van Heer (2000: 90). It starts with an outward movement from the place of origin, followed by an inward movement to a new place of inhabitancy, then either a return to the place of previous residence or alternatively an onward movement to another location or non-movement, or 'staying put' as he terms it.

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<sup>15</sup> She identifies the following terms found in the discourse of repatriation: reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, rebuilding, readjustment, readaptation, reacculturation, reassimilation, reinsertion, reintroduction, recovery and re-establishment.





**Box 4:** Schematic Migration Circle

**Source:** Author, 2001

Given the fact that many will return to places affected by war or conflict one might further envisage that the migrants will go through a period of more physical activities such as reconstruction or re-establishment, or a wider range of activities frequently labelled as rehabilitation. Kumar (1997), focusing on war-torn societies, notes that rehabilitation:

*...involves redefining and reorienting relationship between political authority and citizenship, revisiting relationships between different ethnic and social groups, creating a civil society in its broadest sense, promoting psychosocial healing and reconciliation, and reforming economic policies and institutions that foster entrepreneurship and individual initiative.*

A similar connotation is found in the description of the place, property or geographical area the migrants originate from and are expected to return to, which is frequently defined as the migrants' 'home'. Long (2000:198), however, introduces a wider understanding of this entity or space, moving beyond the physical extension of a house or a property, by using the term livelihood. His description of a livelihood, which seems to provide a better ground for analysis of how migrants re-establish themselves in a community, and not only a house or a shelter, is that it 'expresses the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions.'

Furthermore, one can predict situations where a return to the migrant's home area or livelihood might not be feasible or safe, and where the migrants will thus have to resettle, voluntarily or forced, in unfamiliar areas. However, even if they are able to

resettle in their previous homes Hammond (1999) found return ‘to be more of a new beginning than a return to the past’; thus he argues that rather than applying the ‘re’ terms to all resettlement one should use terms more related to social change, such as construction, creativity, innovation and improvisation. This argument is supported by Black and Koser (1999), who further underline the need to ‘recognise the potential of returnees; to incorporate the challenges faced by returnees; and to understand that both social and physical reconstruction are part of the return process.’

The latter argument illustrates another dimension of migration research relating to the assessment of needs and planning for the provision of humanitarian assistance for forced migrants, throughout the entire migration circle. This is the difficulty of making general assumptions on a group level in advance, as the situation of the migrants will often be influenced both by individual decisions during the flight, return and resettlement phase and also, most probably, by external forces unknown to the migrants upon the start of their repatriation. Thus, arguably, there will be a need to address the individual needs of migrants, and especially individuals within groups that by definition are vulnerable, such as women and children and the disabled.

However, as most of these above-mentioned reviews agree, none of the present theories provide a comprehensive tool to analyse migration, which, according to Papastergiadis (2000: 17) ‘has left a serious gap in our knowledge of the turbulent dynamics of migration.’ Harpviken (1997: 22) adds a concern that they can easily ‘reduce people to mere physical objects, deprived of any free will and capability to affect their situation.’

## 1.8. Forced Migrants’ Rights to Assistance

The documents that detail the rights of forced migrants are the UN Refugee Convention, and for IDPs the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. When it comes to the rights assigned to refugees the UNHCR (2001) establishes that:

*(...) the refugees should receive at least the same rights and basic help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident, including certain fundamental entitlements of every individual. Thus refugees have basic civil rights, including the freedom of thought, of movement, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. Similarly, economic and social rights apply to refugees as they do to other individuals. Every refugee should have access to medical care. Every adult refugee should have the right to work. No refugee child should be deprived of schooling.*

For the IDPs, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, presented in 1998, outline a similar range of civil and political rights as well as economic and social rights, as established in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and its two covenants of 1966, often referred to as Human Rights Law (OCHA undated). This is, in short, a right to protection and assistance while displaced, and, further, ‘to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes and place of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country.’ It is underlined in Principle 28 that IDPs hold a right to be involved in decisions influencing their future, stating ‘[S]pecial efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of

internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration.’

The major difference between the refugee convention and the IDP guidelines, besides the legal status of these documents, concerns the placing of responsibility for the provision of protection and humanitarian assistance. The UNHCR (2001) acknowledged that ‘when there are no other resources available -- from governments of the country of asylum or other agencies -- UNHCR provides assistance to refugees (and other persons of concern) who cannot meet their own basic needs,’ while for the IDPs (OCHA 1999) it is established, in Principle 3, that national authorities hold the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance for IDPs within their jurisdiction. Or, as the guidelines conclude in Principle 30, ‘grant and facilitate for international humanitarian organizations and other appropriate actors, in the exercise of their respective mandates, rapid and unimpeded access to internally displaced persons to assist in their return or resettlement and reintegration.’ In effect, no international humanitarian organisation has been assigned responsibility for ensuring protection of and provision of assistance to IDPs.

However, under international humanitarian law, or the Geneva Convention<sup>16</sup> as it is better known, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is by Convention IV of 12 August 1949, mandated to protect and assist ‘civilian persons in time of war.’ Thus the ICRC (1999) holds the view that ‘[I]ts offer of assistance, whether with regard to relief or other activities, does not therefore constitute interference in the internal affairs of a State since it is provided for in humanitarian law’. And, consequently

*(...) internally displaced persons affected by armed conflict -- who constitute one of the main categories of the displaced and who in many cases are also in the most life-threatening situation -- would often constitute a primary target group for ICRC activities. They are at the core of the ICRC mandate, and represent a considerable part of its caseload. (ICRC 2000)*

The ICRC is, however, voicing concern about how vague the UN definition of IDPs is ‘as it covers a group that is so wide and whose needs are so varied that it exceeds the capacities and expertise of any single organization.’

While that might well be the case, there are other concerns relating to the ability of international agencies to assist IDPs. Foremost among these is a lack of funding for agencies assisting IDPs and refugees, a concern both UNHCR and the US Committee for Refugees have raised over recent years. Moreover, the issue of access to IDPs, often denied by warring parties and the question which forced migrants are to be selected and targeted for assistance raise concern within the humanitarian community.

In a number of such situations, where the possibilities of providing assistance are curtailed or associated with a high degree of risk (as in a war zone), NGOs are often called upon, or volunteer, to deliver humanitarian assistance or attempt to increase

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<sup>16</sup> The Geneva Convention came into effect in 1949, with additional Protocols added later, and is a humanitarian law which according to ICRC ‘applies in situations of armed conflict (...)’, ‘(...) whereas human rights, or at least some of them, protect the individual at all times, in war and peace alike.’

the protection of vulnerable groups through their presence. This includes a large and diverse group of agencies that will be detailed in Chapter 2, although a number of these NGOs are particularly mandated to assist refugees and IDPs. Mention could be made here of a number of Refugee Councils, who frequently take on the role of international 'watchdog' for forced migrants' rights to assistance. Such agencies are often far more outspoken than the UN agencies and the ICRC which, bound by their international mandate, often avoid public confrontation with their member states. The Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Steinar Sørli, (Flyktningerådet 2001) stands as an example in his comments on the lack of financial support for refugees: 'there are both political, strategic and economical reasons for the misappropriation -- refugees are sacrificed on the altar of grand politics (author's translation from Norwegian).

However, a critical discourse on how politicised migration issues are is not confined to the more rights-based NGOs; several academics have entered the discussion on what Black and Koser (1999: 4-6) term '[T]he politics of repatriation'. A concern has already been noted that humanitarian actors may not only play a role in assisting migrants, but might also act as tools for governments in achieving their more politically motivated containment goals. Duffield (1998: 37), one of the most articulate opponents, questions whether 'the current emphasis on development and conflict resolution in war zones, insofar as it promises to normalise the situation, complements Fortress Europe's growing preference for refugee return.' Duffield (1997) observes that [relief activities under war conditions] 'help keep conflict-affected populations within their countries of origin', and that such donor interests have 'been a major opportunity for NGO expansion.' This leads him to request the NGOs, as a first step, 'to place the greater good before income and position within the humanitarian marketplace.'

Thus, while there is a legal frame for provision of assistance to both refugees and IDPs (albeit less solid for IDPs) it appears that the humanitarian agencies are placing more importance on their ability to deliver humanitarian assistance than on actually discussing the political implication of the role they assume, or whether they are being used (as Duffield suggests) as tools for Western countries protecting themselves against the influx of forced migrants. This discourse might, however, not be that easily framed, as it is impossible to evade the humanitarian commitment and principle to provide assistance to anyone in need of it. This is the founding principle of the "Code of Conduct", developed by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and NGOs, (IFRC 1994) and, furthermore, now operationalised into a set of minimum standards for assistance provision through the Sphere project (2000).

## 1.9. Conclusion

The term complex political emergency, as illustrated above, is rather open-ended and can be applied to a number of emergency situations placed on a continuum between one single disaster to a temporarily, or long-lasting, disrupted (or stalled) development situation, when there is an internationally recognised 'political' dimension to it. Humanitarian organisations, it appears, have embraced rather than debated and provided nuance to the term, possibly as the looseness of the term has enabled interventions by a wide range of agencies and provided access to a wider

range of funding sources. This observation begs a critical question, namely, for whom is a (political) emergency complex? Is it for the relief agencies, the donors, the media reporting on the complexity, or the local population who have to live in and survive the complexity both before and after the humanitarian interventions? Furthermore, would it be less complex if the range of external actors had paid more attention to the view of the local population, or of the migrants fleeing 'the complexity', and would such a strategy have made it less 'complex' for either group?

For the purpose of this thesis it would seem most relevant to adopt the description Hallam provides of a CPE in the RNN publication, including state collapse as a factor, whilst adding the observations made by the author as to what differentiates a disaster and a CPE. Moreover, the impact of a CPE on the state structure and, not least, the different elements of what constitutes a civil society, must be taken into consideration. Consequently, there is a need to consider which needs these different and at times competing elements of a civil society might have for humanitarian assistance. Included here should be so-called 'post-conflict situations' when there is still a recognised need for humanitarian assistance and/or when forced migrants have either been unable or unwilling to return. In addition, consideration should be given to those situations where the conflict at large has not come to an end, although there might be a large geographical areas excluded from the armed conflict; or where people have voluntarily returned or taken up their daily life despite any ongoing skirmishes.

There is no doubt that forced migration constitute a major humanitarian challenge, by while the numbers of forced migrants increases, migration research grapples with theory development to enable analyses of the increasingly complex dynamics of migration discourse. From the literature review there appear to be no prominent contradictions between the different generations of theory; rather an evolution of theory as empirical research has added knowledge to the subject. The distinction between forced and voluntary migration, however, is still far from clear, with far-reaching consequences for those who seek protection from armed conflicts, hunger and persecution. Particularly vulnerable are those who are internally displaced and not able or allowed to cross into neighbouring countries. They are not covered by any binding international legislation, nor are they granted the same right to humanitarian assistance as forced migrants, who are formally recognised as refugees.

Other concerns relate to a lack of knowledge of decision-making processes, and the degree to which these are individual or group orientated, and, in particular, how extended are the various groups and which persons (or gender) within the group make the decisions.

Of particular concern is the interaction between forced migrants and the humanitarian agencies: this includes the nature of the experience, and on what information the agencies base their policy and interventions, especially the degree to which they seek the active participation of the forced migrants in these processes. Many researchers seem to question the ability of humanitarian agencies to regard the forced migrants as social actors, with a right to be informed and involved in their own recovery, rather than as an undifferentiated group of migrants with easily defined needs and predictable migration patterns. Arguably, solid needs assessment, country- and situation-specific understanding of vulnerability, establishment of trust

between forced migrants and assistance providers, sharing of information between humanitarian agencies and coordinated actions could all be activities that can enable a move from a group to a more individual approach, ensuring that the needs of minorities, marginalised and specially vulnerable groups within society are met.

It is firmly established that NGOs play an important role as providers of humanitarian assistance for, and to some extent in the protection of, forced migrants, not least in countries where there is war or internal conflict, or where the government or groups competing for control over land or government positions are not able or willing to assist forced migrants. However, as some commentators suggest, the agencies might become instruments for governments wishing to contain forced migrants within the developing world, thus reducing migration to the West and to other developing countries. So, while the humanitarian deeds might be rooted in well-founded humanitarian principles, the politics behind the selection of countries and migrants to assist might be highly political and less based on a universal humanitarianism.

This notion would warrant a closer scrutiny of the large groups of organisations termed humanitarian agencies, and how they interact at both the policy and implementation level. While this includes intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) such as the humanitarian and development organisations of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation and the International Organisation of Migration, for the purpose of this thesis the main focus will be on the role of the non-governmental organisations, NGOs. These are increasingly implementing programmes directed at forced migrants on behalf of the IGOs, and are working in a number of locations where some IGOs face restrictions. The NGOs are, however, a very diverse group of organisations, representing different constitutions, operational concepts, and religious and political ideals, which will be detailed in the next chapter.

## 2. Non-governmental Organisations

The term ‘Non-governmental Organisation’ (NGO) in fact only indicates what these organisations are not: they are not a governmental body. The term does not provide a description of what role and activities such organisations might take on in complex political emergencies, nor, as Goodhand and Hulme (1998: 72) note, does it ‘do justice to the diversity and range of organisations that fall under its label.’

This Chapter therefore sets out to explain the history and development of the NGO sector before the number of NGOs and their financial resources is discussed in more details. Various definitions of NGOs are then presented, leading into a discussion on the diversity of NGOs and their assumed weaknesses, before elaborating on their position within civil society, bearing in mind that NGOs are not necessarily representatives of such civil societies.

NGOs methods of interaction with forced migrants and the philosophy and practicalities of assessment of their needs (and resources) is presented and examined. The author then summarises some field experiences before more details are provided on tools NGOs might apply for their needs assessments, whereby a conclusion is drawn on what role NGOs might assume in complex political emergencies (CPEs).

### 2.1. The Rise of the NGOs

Before embarking on a review of theoretical considerations of the NGO sector, one might start with a brief recapping of history. This to identify why people throughout history have felt compelled to provide assistance and care for people in need and suffering, due to personal tragedies, accidents, natural disasters or warfare; and how such efforts led to the establishment of organisations through which they could be organised. This is often defined as ‘humanitarianism’, which, according to Isaac (1993: 13) is

*(..). a feeling of concern for and benevolence toward fellow human beings. It is a universal phenomenon manifested globally and throughout the ages. Humanitarianism as practical generosity or philanthropic activities to promote the well-being of others is also a universal phenomenon.*

#### 2.1.1. Religious Influence

All major world religions promote humanitarian values and instruct their followers to take care of people in need of assistance. In Judaism the following command is given: ‘you should open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, to the need in

your land' (Deuteronomy 15:11), and the follower is required 'to leave the corners of the field, the gleanings of the harvest, and the crop of the seventh year for the poor' (Leviticus 19:9-10).

We find the same values in the two other religions rooted in Judaism, namely Christianity and Islam. Helping the poor is in Christianity deemed as important as fasting and prayer (Matthew 6: 1-18) and the parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the importance placed upon it.

In Islam human beings are seen to be serving God through their good deeds, such as almsgiving and care for orphans and the elderly. This principle is stated in the Qur'an (Ali 1975), in Surat 23-39, which furthermore describes the types of charity to which all devoted Muslims are expected to contribute and from which they are eligible to be assisted. One is the compulsory and annual duty termed *zakat*, which, moreover, is one of the five pillars of Islam, and the second is a voluntary contribution called *sadaqah*. The *zakat* could be delivered directly to those in need by the almsgiver, or be distributed through a national government (as in Pakistan) or a humanitarian organisation. All Muslims are assessed for *zakat*, and there are eight categories of defined needs for which the *zakat* can be utilized, of which the needs of forced migrants might be one. The voluntary *sadaqah* is often given at the end of the fast of Ramadan, while many Muslims also donate property for charitable purposes (*waqf*), to be used for distribution to the needy or for the maintenance of religious institutions.

Giving alms to the poor is also regarded in both Hinduism and Buddhism as an important spiritual act, though primarily regarded to be to the benefit of the giver (Isaac 1993). One can therefore summarise that all major religions place importance on individuals providing care and assistance to other human beings, notwithstanding differences in the extent to which the religious networks and organisations have engaged themselves in the collection and distribution of assistance.

The history of organised relief provision, or charity, can on the Christian side be taken back to early missionary societies, such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, established in 1698, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, founded in 1707, which both included the practice of charity (Isaac 1993: 14).

This work was closely linked with the interests of the colonial powers of that time where missionary activities were seen to support their strategic interests. Taking Pakistan and Afghanistan as an example, it is easy to recognise the strategic importance of the Christian Missionary Hospitals established along the border between Afghanistan and India (Pakistan of today) by the end of the 1880s. The British had an ongoing battle with the Afghan king, and the colonial administration tried very hard to win over or pacify the opposing tribes. Providing these with services and economic support, the hospitals proved a useful tool in this strategy, despite a general British ban on Christian missionary activities in the Muslim native states of India (Watt 1991: 104).



### 2.1.2. ICRC and IFRC

A new dimension of humanitarian assistance was unfolded in 1863, after Henry Dunant had witnessed a lack of treatment of and respect for the war-wounded and prisoners at Solferiono, Italy, in 1859. Describing in his book (Dunant (1862 (1986)) the appalling situations of soldiers on both sides of the conflict, he questioned: '[W]ould it not be possible, in time of peace and quiet, to form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers?' His question and initiative led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the signing of the Geneva Convention by a number of nations, securing protection and medical care of the war-wounded (ICRC 1998). National Committees of the Red Cross or the Red Crescent (in Muslim countries) were later established in most countries, the American Red Cross as early in 1882 (Ahmed 2001: 29).

### 2.1.3. After the World Wars

In the aftermath of World War I several new private and non-governmental initiatives emerged. In 1919 Englantyne Jebb was instrumental in establishing Save the Children (SCF) in the United Kingdom. The aim of the organisation she founded, together with her sister, was to assist children in Germany and Austria who suffered due to an economic blockade imposed on these countries. A combination of an awareness campaign in the UK and provision of food for the children set the standard for many later relief operations and led to the establishment of national Save the Children organisations in a large number of countries (International Save the Children Alliance 2002). The League of Nations established a more governmental and larger operation in 1920 for the repatriation of war prisoners. This work was led by Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian researcher and explorer, who later, from 1921-23, directed a large famine relief programme in the Volga and South Ukrainian areas. His engagement led to the establishment of the Nansen International Office for Refugees, providing war refugees with legal documents, called the Nansen pass, enabling them to cross national borders on their way home (Microsoft 1995). The organisation's activities were later taken over by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but there were also private initiatives, such as the International Rescue Committee, an American NGO established in 1933, which grew out of this same concern for refugees and war victims at that time of history (IRC 1998).

During and just after World War II the pattern of the First World War was repeated as people became aware of the suffering of civilians due to occupation, war and forced migration. A number of what are now the largest and most influential Western NGOs were established during this period, among these the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief in 1942, later called Oxfam. This was one of a number of groups in the UK aiming to highlight problems created by the Nazi occupation of Greece, and requesting that relief be sent to those in most urgent need (Oxfam 2002). In Norway three out of the five largest NGOs were established during this period: the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Redd Barna and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

#### 2.1.4. The 1960s and 1970s

Islamic countries that gained independence from their colonial powers from the end of the 1940s gradually followed suit. Islamic-based Red Crescent Societies, as in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, were established at the beginning of the 1960s, as was the Muslim World League (1962), which became the first NGO to be set up in Saudi Arabia. This coincided with strong economic growth in some of the Arab nations, and an Islamic revival with a strong emphasis on charity and a responsibility for the wider Islamic *umma*.

During the 1960s and 1970s a number of major disasters occurred; for example, the Bangladesh war and the Biafran genocide and famine. With the introduction of television in the USA and Europe the stories and, not least, the pictures from these emergencies were transmitted directly into people's living rooms. This led to a greater awareness of what suffering people in other parts of the world endured and an increased desire to give support. As a result, a large number of western relief-based agencies emerged in the wake of these emergencies. One of the best known is Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), established in 1971 by French medical doctors disappointed with the muteness of the ICRC. A strong international political engagement during the same period gave rise to a number of solidarity movements in the West, providing support for the Vietnamese and Palestinian liberation movements, as well as mobilising against apartheid in South Africa. The information such movements disseminated in their home countries, in the hope of informing and mobilising the public, was seen to be equally important with the material and financial support they contributed within the country or to the groups to which they pledged their solidarity.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was an important element of the Cold War and led to similar political mobilisation and the establishment of a number of new solidarity groups, branding themselves NGOs. This included Afghan Aid in England, Afghanistan Committees in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, and a variety of support groups in the United States. These organisations combined political mobilisation against the Soviet invasion in Europe with fundraising for their humanitarian assistance to refugees in Pakistan and, for some, their cross-border activities into Afghanistan. Some of the organisations that emerged in support of Afghanistan later expanded their activities to other countries, like the French Solidarité and Médecine du Monde (MDM). In the Islamic world a number of organisations got involved in support for Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. Of the eighteen Islamic NGOs that are members of the Pakistan-based Islamic Coordination Council (ICC), ten were established during the years of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (ICC 1995).

#### 2.1.5. The 1980s and 1990s

However, it was not only in the western world that the number of NGOs increased; a similar pattern emerged throughout the 1980s and 1990s in many developing countries and CPEs. Some organisations emerged from within villages and communities, seeing a need and a reward for their community to be gained by organising themselves. They are thus frequently termed grassroots organisations

(GRO), and later gradually started to establish networks at the national and international level (Goodhand and Hulme 1997: 5). Others drew on the opportunity opening up when international donors started to channel more of their funding towards civil society rather than bureaucratic, slow and at times corrupt state administrations, by establishing new NGOs or expanding the activity range of existing ones. Hulme and Edwards (1997: 4), citing a range of sources, states that the number of government-registered NGOs in Nepal increased from 220 in 1990 to 1210 in 1993 and in Tunisia from 1886 in 1988 to 5186 in 1991. This development, however, did bring with it a number of rather opportunistic elements, seeing the NGO sector as an opening for a new business opportunity.

The rapid rise in the number of NGOs took place not only in developing countries. The latest emergencies, such as in Rwanda, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo, led to a number of new organisational establishments in the West as well. According to Smillie and Helmich (1993), quoted in Goodhand and Hulme (1997: 4), the number of development NGOs registered in OECD countries grew from 1600 in 1980 to 2970 in 1993. These figures would, however, exclude a large number of smaller relief-oriented NGOs who at short notice were able to attract media attention, emerging on the scene of the disaster with a truck of relief supplies and a TV crew to document their activities and secure new funds. 'All at once the humanitarian system boomed', Ahmed (2001: 32) explains, and '[B]ecause of their flexibility, speed, disregard of state borders and sheer manpower, humanitarian NGOs profited most from this boom.' At the height of the crisis in Rwanda nearly 200 NGOs, mostly international, were operational and in Angola more than 100. UN officials described it as a 'relief flood' and Cohen and Deng (1998: 192-193) concluded that such uncoordinated action led to 'inadequate geographical and sectoral coverage, duplication, competition, and ineffective use of resources.'

The number and diversity of the 'helpers', however, not only became a worry for UN staff; the established NGO community grew increasingly concerned about their own fundraising ability and, moreover, the humanitarian image and practice this new brand of media-driven agencies exposed. Their response was multifaceted, including the establishment of a code of conduct for humanitarian intervention (IFRC 1994), followed by the establishment of a humanitarian charter and a set of minimum standards in disaster response (Sphere Project 2000), to ensure a more coherent and coordinated NGO approach. But, as the adherence to the codes and standards was a voluntary act, questions did emerge as to whether either an ombudsman or a more involuntary coordination system, or one led by a single UN agency, could ensure a larger degree of self-control, and even control over a diverse and rapidly growing NGO community (Christoplos 1999; Mitchell and Doane 1999).

Fowler (1997), discussing the role of Northern Development NGOs, has compiled a list of acronyms of what he terms 'NGDO pretenders' presented below in Box 5.

<i>Acronyms for NGDO pretenders<sup>20</sup></i>	
BRINGO Briefcase NGO	An NGO which is no more than a briefcase carrying a well written proposal
ComeN'GO Come and go NGO	An NGO that appears spasmodically; only used by the owners when the NGO pasture looks greener
CONGO Commercial NGO	NGOs set up by businesses in order to participate in bids, help win contracts, and reduce taxation
CRINGO Criminal NGO	Organisation established for illegal purposes, especially import-export (i.e. smuggling); common in transition economies
DONGO Donor NGO	Created and owned by donors to do their job while shifting overhead costs outside
FANGO Fake NGO	NGO used as a front for something else; not uncommon in Eastern Europe
GONGO Government-Owned NGO	Type of GRINGO used to capture or redirect non-profit funds allocated by the official aid system
GRINGO Government-Run and Initiated NGO	Variation of a Quango, but with the function of countering the actions of real NGDOs; common in Africa
MANGO Mafia NGO	A criminal NGO providing services of the money laundering, enforcement and protection variety; prevalent in Eastern Europe
MONGO My Own NGO	An NGO which is the personal property of an individual, often dominated by his or her ego
NGI Non-Governmental Individual	A person who operates as if he or she is an NGO but without an organisational affiliation
PANGO Party NGO	An aspiring, defeated or banned political party or politician dressed as an NGO; species of Central Asia and Indo-China
PHANGO Phantom NGO	NGO existing only in the mind of the speaker; used to bolster an argument
PONGO Politician's NGO	Established to capture or direct NGO funding to the home constituency as a defence against incursion by opponents
QUANGO Quasi NGO	Para-state body set up by government as an NGO, often to enable better conditions of service or create political distance

**Box 5:** *Acronyms for NGO Pretenders**Source:* Alan Fowler, 1997

Another response, also influenced by trends in business and globalisation in general, was the formation of larger international NGO alliances. Examples here are CARE International, the Save the Children Alliance, Oxfam International and MSF, which, with national branches in a number of countries, could raise funds from both their

governments and national development agencies, or, if located within the European Union (EU), from ECHO and Union development funds.

The 1990s also brought in a larger degree of self-critical review among the NGOs, not least due to the work of Mary B. Anderson (1996; 1999) and the coining of the term ‘Do No Harm’, responding to the rising knowledge that aid did not only ‘do good’ but could also fuel and even prolong conflicts ‘by permitting belligerents to continue fighting while their civilian populations are cared for by the international community (Cohen and Deng 1998: 188). A part of this debate is how political and/or religious movements and parties, such as Hezb-e-Islami in Afghanistan,<sup>17</sup> have formed humanitarian branches, termed NGOs, through which they can raise funds and promote their cause. A sideline of this debate is a discussion of the distinction between military and civilian humanitarian action (Duffield and Macrae 2001), as military intervention on humanitarian grounds can, as in Bosnia Herzegovina, lead to aid transport, protection and distribution by military personnel. Further discussion focussed on the introduction of commercial companies in the provision of humanitarian assistance, as in Humanitarian Mine Action (Harpviken, Millard et al. 2001), in which companies were invited to bid for demining operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, to mention two countries where this practice was introduced.

### 2.1.6. The Humanitarian Regime

A guiding principle for humanitarian assistance is provided in the second paragraph of the Code of Conduct (IFRC 1994), signed up to by a large number of NGOs. It states that ‘[A]id is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.’ That statement takes us back to the founding idea of humanitarian assistance, which subsequently led to the establishment of NGOs to organise the provision of assistance to people in dire need, wherever that might be in the world. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent adherence to neo-liberal economics and liberal democratic theory has also to a larger degree opened the way for NGOs to assume a larger role, not only in classical relief and development operations, but in undertaking a range of tasks previously undertaken by states because of ‘their supposed cost-effectiveness in reaching the poorest’ (Goodhand and Hulme 1997: 5).

These changes have increased the collaboration (and competition) between the different humanitarian actors, the NGOs, the IGOs, the states and the donors, which is now frequently referred to as the ‘international humanitarian regime’. According to Ofstad, Suhrke et.al. (1999) this term ‘means the system of actors, norms, and responses which has developed to save lives and reduce suffering during, or as a result of, armed conflict and natural disasters’ and is called a regime ‘because it is not firmly structured but a loosely organised entity, held together more by common norms and purposes than authoritative structures of funding and decision making.’

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<sup>17</sup> The Social and Welfare department of the party was, in 1990, transformed overnight into an Afghan NGO, seeking funding from international donors and the UN.

Goodhand and Hulme (1997: 3-4), while discussing the relationship between NGOs, states and donors, summarise quite accurately the present challenges of this humanitarian regime, where the NGOs have become far more influential over the last decade, as:

*...there is no consensus on the specification of where the limits of the NGO world lie; theoretical frameworks for analysing such relationships are only partially developed; within the NGO, donor and state categories there is enormous diversity; the associational cultures varies greatly from country to country; the empirical study of such relationships has received little attention; and individual NGOs, donor agencies and states are far from monolithic – different individuals and groups within each group have differing interests and viewpoints which can make the identification of a precise ‘agency’ position difficult.*

## 2.2. NGO's in Profile

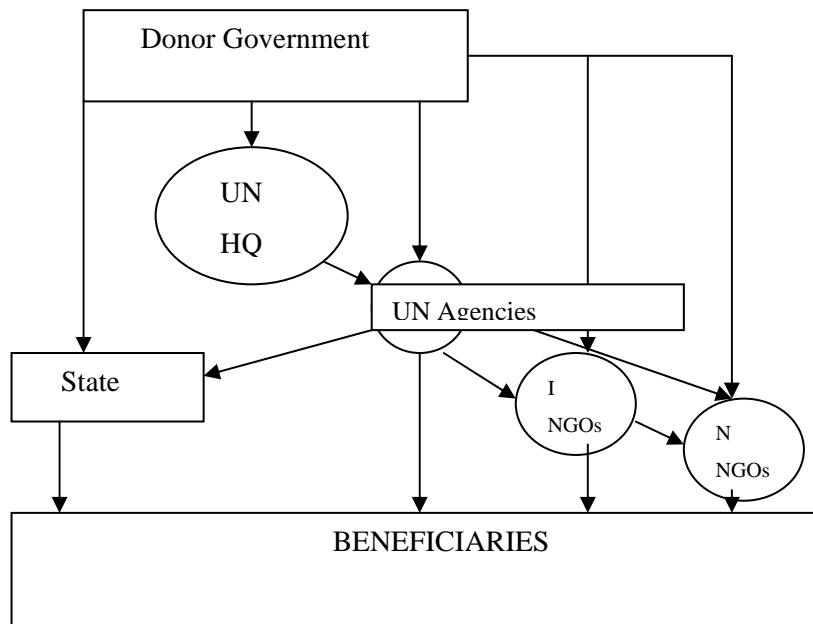
While the total number of non-governmental organisations is uncertain, especially if the large number of charities and interest groups is included, the World Bank (World Bank Group 1999: 3) estimates that there are now between 6,000 and 30,000 national NGOs in developing countries, while there are hundreds of thousands of Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Smillie (1997), moreover, estimated the number of Northern based NGOs working in Southern countries at 4000 to 5000, while Simmons (1998: 89), based on the 1997 American Sociological Review and the 1988 Yearbook of International Organizations, estimated the number of international NGOs at between 5000 and 6000 in 1996, up from around 1000 in 1960. In short, there is no reliable and updated overall record on NGO numbers. Estimates can, at best, be made at a national level.

### 2.2.1. Estimated Value of Humanitarian Assistance

The picture is consequently similar when it comes to estimating the value of humanitarian assistance channelled through NGOs. The institutional arrangement for recording such figures on a world basis seems non-existent and furthermore, there might be a strong unwillingness on the part of the NGOs (and even governmental and private donors) to disclose such figures. Even if such reluctance should be overcome, the fact that the NGOs have become the main implementing partner of UN agencies in emergency situations (Cohen and Deng 1998: 188) makes it even more difficult to differentiate between the various budget and donor categories. This is so particularly where funds then pass through a number of organisational levels before reaching the intended beneficiaries. In many cases the funds have passed through four organisational levels, all charging a certain administrative percentage.

The complexity of the funding channel system is illustrated in Box 6 below, illustrating how one donor might fund a range of implementing organisations, that again might channel their funds through others before the assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries.





**Box 6:** Funding Channels

*Source:* Author, 2002

There are, however, some figures and estimates available to highlight general funding trends. The World Bank acknowledges that from 1970 to 1985 development aid disbursed through international NGOs increased tenfold, and Fowler (1997) states that from 1990 to 1995 official aid to Northern-based Development Organisations (NGDOs) rose from US\$ 2.3 billion to US\$ 4 billion. According to Goodhand and Hulme (1997: 4-6), quoting figures from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the total spending of development NGOs increased from US \$ 2.8 billion in 1980 to US\$5.7 billion in 1993, while Cohen (1998: 364) set the figure of financial transfers, through NGOs, from the industrialised to the developing world at US \$ 8 million (which is supported by World Bank estimates).

The OECD estimated that the volume of their members' aid going to NGOs increased from 0.7 % of the total in 1975 to 3.6 % in 1985 and 5 % in 1993/94. However, the OECD pointed out that these figures grossly underestimate the total value of humanitarian assistance channelled through NGOs as major bilateral and multilateral donors are excluded, and funding for relief operations might also not be included. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, which annually publishes a Development Cooperation Report, further states that practically all of these contributions, which exclude private donations, come from OECD countries, with some 75 % contributed by European Governments and the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission (ECHO).

According to Gordenker and Weiss (1996: 218), 80 % of the financial value of assistance in complex emergencies is channelled through eight to ten larger conglomerates of international NGOs while Simmons (1998: 88) states that 'eight major groups now control about 50 % of the relief market'. As regards single

agencies, such as CARE USA, mentioned by Cohen (1998: 364), these operate with budgets tallying US \$ 500 million.

### 2.2.2. Donor Dependency

Hulme and Edwards (1997: 6-7) in the edited book 'NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?' point out another important tendency of increased NGO dependency on funding from external donors, particularly from the humanitarian and development departments of national governments. Simmons (1998: 94) records that governmental funding for NGOs has increased from 1.5 % in 1970 to around 40 % in 1998, while the World Bank had registered a similar increase in external funding for developmental NGOs they note that the increase was much higher in some countries, depending upon their overall bilateral aid agency policy. While in Austria only 10 % of NGO income is derived from official sources, the figure for Australia is 35 %, USA 66 %, Canada 70 % and Sweden 85 %. Drawing on their personal experience in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Nepal, Hulme and Edwards estimate that in these countries 'a dependence of 80 to 90 % on official funds is common.' And as the authors conclude (1997: 278): '[A]lthough official funds give NGOs more resources to carry out field operations, these funds might make NGOs less outspoken and limit their possibilities in lobbying and advocacy.' Greenaway (1999: 18) suggests that '[D]onors (and not beneficiaries) states are the main "customers" buying humanitarian services and have driven an enormous and well-documented expansion in the sector'.

While this example doesn't prove that governments are, in reality, setting the policy of these NGOs, it could, however, indicate that their dependency on governmental funds limits their project portfolio to those favoured by their donors. Or, as Natsios (1997: 32) postulates 'the international humanitarian agenda cannot be sustained outside of the politics and foreign policy of the great powers'; whereas some large NGOs, according to Brett (2000: 31) 'look less and less like charities and more and more like public sector subcontracting firms.'

Consequently, the NGO sector has, through its increased numbers and funding, played a more prominent role in the provision of humanitarian assistance during the last decade, but its ability to act independently might have been limited due to its dependency on governmental funding and linkages to the humanitarian and political priorities of Western donors providing the bulk of humanitarian assistance.

## 2.3. Defining an NGO

There are a number of different definitions given for the term 'non-governmental organisation' (NGO), many of which point to the fact (see for instance Smillie (1995)) that the name does not actively explain what they are doing. The term 'voluntary' or 'private' organisation, used in the United States and in Scandinavian countries, might be more apposite and both terms are included in what others define as the 'non-profit sector', detailed later in this chapter.



Setting language definition aside, there have been several research projects examining the non-governmental sector that have sought to establish what this large and diverse group of organisations has in common and to identify some of their main characteristics. Some of the early NGO research was undertaken by Korten (1987; cited in Sahley (1995)), who, for analytical purposes, divided NGOs into four categories:

- Voluntary organisations that pursue a social mission driven by a commitment to shared values.
- Public service contractors that function as market-oriented non-profit businesses serving public purposes.
- People's organisations that represent their members' interests, have member-accountable leadership and are substantially self-reliant.
- Governmental NGOs (GONGOs) that are creations of government and serve as instruments of public policy.

Korten (1990) later undertook an evolution study of NGOs, in which he grouped them into four distinct generations:

1. The first generation of *welfare oriented* Northern NGOs worked directly with communities and attempted to alleviate the conditions of poverty by *transferring goods and services* to the poor.
2. The second generation marked a shift away from temporary poverty alleviation strategies to attempts to *initiate a process of sustainable development*, in partnership with communities, while recognising the need to address the wider issues of institutional development.
3. The third-generation NGO strategies are concerned *with sustainable systems and institutions*. Efforts to overcome institutional or policy constraints and to create the conditions conducive to development are central to these approaches.
4. The fourth-generation NGO is comprised of social or '*peoples development movements*', driven not by budget or organisational structures, but rather by ideas, by a vision of a better world (author's highlighting).

Another way of grouping NGOs is a classification applied in an evaluation of the Norwegian aid sector (Tvedt 1995: 117), where a distinction is made between NGOs with 1) humanitarian-altruistic attitudes; 2) political-idealistic aims; 3) missionary purposes; 4) interest organisations and organisations that promote social welfare; or 5) links to occupational organisations and trade unions. This classification, however, might be more specific to the Norwegian NGO sector rather than providing an analytical tool for the broader international NGO sector.

The World Bank (2000), attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of the NGO sector, and recognising the term NGO as very broad and encompassing many different types of organisation, thus defines NGOs as 'private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development'. They however note that

*(...) in wider usage, the term NGO can be applied to any non-profit organization which is independent from a government. NGOs are typically value-based organizations which depend, on the whole or in part, on charitable donations and voluntary services. Although the NGO sector has become increasingly professionalized over the last two decades, principles of altruism and voluntarism remain the defining characteristics.*

Turning to the operational NGOs: these are classified in three main groups, which appear to be useful when one is analysing the diversity of NGOs found in different countries. The first is the community-based organisation (CBOs), also referred to as grassroots or people's organisations, 'which serve a specific population in a narrow geographical area.' As examples of CBOs the World Bank lists women's groups, credit circles, youth clubs, cooperatives and farmers' associations. These are 'normally "membership" organisations made up of a group of individuals who have joined together to further their own interests' as opposed to the two other categories, the national NGOs, which 'operate in individual developing countries' and the international NGOs, which are 'typically headquartered in developed countries and carry out operations in more than one developing country', which the World Bank (WB) defines as an "intermediary NGO" formed to serve others.'

However, the most comprehensive attempt to analyse the 'non-profit sector', which includes all these types of NGOs, stems from a long-running research project at John Hopkins University in the USA. 'The Comparative Non-profit Sector Project' has been ongoing since 1989, and encompasses background studies from about 40 countries. In a recent working paper by Salamon, Hems et al. (2000: 4-9), summing up the project so far, non-profit organisations were identified as entities that are:

- Self-governing organisations.
- Non profit-distributing.
- Private and non-governmental in basic structure.
- *Voluntary* to some meaningful extent, and therefore likely to engage people on the basis of some shared interest or concerns.

In the same study the validity of five hypotheses is examined, relating to the potential contributions and potential drawbacks of non-profit organisations, as identified from literature studies, through measurement and ranking in a number of target countries through expert and focus group interviews. The five contributions identified are:

1. The service role (including comparatively higher quality, greater equity, lower cost/efficiency and high degree of specialisation).
2. The innovation role.
3. The advocacy role.
4. The expressive and leadership development role.
5. The community building and democratisation role.

Drawbacks identified included:

- Particularism.
- Paternalism.

- Excessive amateurism or professionalism.
- Resource insufficiency.
- Accountability gap.

While some variation is identified, both positively and negatively, the general picture is that organisations within the non-profit sector perform with fewer drawbacks and vulnerabilities than frequently assumed. It appears, however, that the social capital and expressive functions are less developed than their role as service provider. Thus the project concludes positively, describing the non-profit sector as ‘a vehicle of considerable promise for alleviating problems facing the world’ (Salamon, Hems et al. 2000: 24).<sup>18</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from this review is that there is not one final definition of what constitutes a non-governmental organisation, but rather broad frames with which a large and diverse range of organisations might associate themselves. Some broad common characteristics do, however, emerge from the various research projects undertaken to provide insight into this sector; namely, that the organisations should basically not be directly organisationally associated with a government or intergovernmental organisation (although they still might receive the main bulk of funding from such sources), but be self-governing, non-profit-making and have a degree of voluntary contributions, either in their constitutions or among their intended beneficiaries.

However, while the above analysis seeks to identify commonality within this wide sector of ‘non-governmental organisations’, one does need to look further at some of the more distinct features and the diversity of these organisations and, certainly, some of the concerns being raised about the entire NGO sector.

## 2.4. NGO Diversity and Assumed Weaknesses

The World Bank (2000: para. 7), in their classification of NGOs, distinguishes between ‘*operational NGOs*, whose primary purpose is to fund, design, or implement development-related programs or projects’ and a second category, ‘*advocacy NGOs*, whose primary purpose is to defend or promote a specific development cause and which seek to influence the development policies and practices of the Bank, governments, and other bodies.’

Making use of this development-oriented NGO distinction, but expanding it beyond the development scene, one could arguably include within the group of *operational NGOs* both relief and emergency oriented NGOs and those engaging in mid- and longer-term rehabilitation and development programmes. This would then lead to the inclusion of more specialised agencies such as the range of large NGOs primarily providing medical assistance to people affected by war or natural disasters; more technically oriented ones such as engineering, water supply, education, trauma care, and Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA), to mention a few of the specialisations; and

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that the cases for this study are predominantly drawn from European countries; the only ‘complex emergencies’, as defined by the United Nations, are Slovakia (in the Balkans) and Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (in the Great Lakes region).

the larger group of agencies specialising in relief intervention. Add to these a sizable group of larger NGOs with a broader activity spectrum (CARE, IRC, Oxfam etc.), which might also engage themselves in rehabilitation and development-oriented activities, and this group will presumably include the vast majority of both international and national NGOs.

While the World Bank, naturally, includes *advocacy NGOs* with particular development interests, one does need to look further as to which advocacy issues can be included when reviewing such activities in a CEP context. Naturally, protection and human rights issues spring to mind, where NGOs like Amnesty International (2002) and Human Rights Watch (2002) have played a central role in advocating the rights of forced migrants in general as well as groups frequently found to have a higher degree of vulnerability in conflict situations, such as ethnic minorities, women and children. Less known, but probably more important for identifying and documenting human rights violations on the ground, and fraught with higher risks, is a large number of national human rights organisations. Many cannot, in fear for their lives, operate in public, but channel information to the international organisations that can then publish and act upon their information.<sup>19</sup> These *advocacy NGOs* are fewer in number than the operational ones, but their numbers have increased over recent years as rights-based issues have started to move to the forefront of relief and development discourse (see e.g. UNICEF (1998)).

Between these broader groups fall NGOs which combine *operationality* and *advocacy*, of which the International Save the Children alliance and their various national branches is an illustrative example; as is the vast range of grassroots groups which would advocate their communal interests and implement projects if such should be forthcoming, possibly funded through an NGO or a UN agency. Moreover, and of particular interest for this dissertation, there are NGOs specialised in providing assistance to or advocating on behalf of forced migrants or particular groups of forced migrants. Naturally, catalogued here are a number of refugee councils, such as those of Denmark, Norway and Britain, and the US Committee for Refugees; while an NGO like International Alert specialises in conflict (and thus forced migration) prevention; and a research project leading up to the publication of 'Masses in Flight' (Cohen and Deng 1998) identified 10 larger organisations delivering services directly to IDPs.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly enough, as the authors observe, (1998: 189-190) none of these 10 agencies had a particular mandate to target IDPs, but see themselves as self-appointed to undertake such tasks. That brings up an important distinction between NGOs and inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) working to assist forced migrants, for while the NGOs are only mandated by their boards or constituencies to assist or advocate on behalf of particular groups, the IGOs have been given an international mandate for their interventions. Examples here are the ICRC and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2002), which both have states as their members.

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<sup>19</sup> This pattern of protection arrangements emerged from interviews with national human rights groups in Aceh Province, Indonesia and Afghanistan.

<sup>20</sup> The NGOs were CARE USA, Caritas Internationalis, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Islamic Relief, Jesuit Refugee Service, Lutheran World Federation, Médecins Sans Frontières, OXFAM, World Council of Churches and World Vision.

However, even as the NGO sector has manifested an incredible rise in number and international influence over the last decades, simultaneously a number of concerns have been raised as to their effectiveness and ability to address the range of tasks they have attempted to take on. In addition to the possibility of prolonging conflict through aid, already mentioned, almost everyone commenting on the sector mentions lack of coordination as a weakness, and Cohen and Deng (1998: 188) point out that despite their emphasis on humanitarian principles, many might target one religious and ethnic group over another. That is a view Smillie (1997: 122-123) supports as he points out that:

*Despite great efforts on the part of most NGOs to appear neutral or 'apolitical' during the Cold War, the record reveals something different. In most of the major disasters of the past two decades, NGOs have repeatedly provided relief, succour, foreign exchange and legitimacy – often on an accidental but sometimes deliberate basis – to combatants.*

Smillie furthermore worries about the political agendas that both NGOs and donors have involved themselves in during emergency work. Which leads into a discussion raised by a number of academics (for example, Slim (1997) and Greenaway (1999)) on the distinction between a 'maximalist' and 'minimalist' humanitarian approach. The first describes agencies that see a need to address the underlying causes of the conflicts, in contrast to agencies that limit themselves to addressing the consequences of the conflict. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is often cited as a good illustration of the latter category, although it is an international organisation rather than an inter- or non-governmental body. The establishment of an organisation like MSF came as a reaction to the ICRC's unwillingness to bring out in public massive restrictions imposed on the ability of humanitarian agencies to provide support for people in need. MSF introduced what they termed 'rebellious humanitarianism' where, according to Bouchet-Saulnier (2000), they see 'acting and speaking as two inseparable elements of providing relief to endangered people', where 'silence can kill'.

It appears, furthermore, that while there is not any internationally adopted definition of a non-governmental organisation, there is also no set of international regulations or requirements that NGOs need to fulfil to be eligible to receive international funding. What applies are the regulations of each nation state for the establishment and registration of such organisations, particularly if they wish to access public funding and receive tax exemption for both organisations and donations.<sup>21</sup> This is surprising when taking into account the large amounts channelled through this humanitarian channel, but could be an indication of how privatised, as opposed to bilateral or multilateral, aid has become. And here one might make the presumption that this is to be seen in connection with donors being a) dissatisfied with the inflexibility of the traditional relief system; b) increasingly able to flag their contributions when donated to their national NGOs; c) constantly exposed to media pressure and NGO funding campaigns; and d) reluctant to support weak states or non-state actors in countries exposed to conflict.

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<sup>21</sup> An example is the Charity Commission for England and Wales, a UK Government Department set up to 'give the public confidence in the integrity of charities'. They have registered 180,000 charities and make available to the public annual information about their accounts, income and expenditure (Charity Commission for England and Wales (2001)).

For the purpose of this study of coordination among non-governmental organisations a wide definition of what an NGO is will be adopted, not least to ensure the inclusion in the study of any possible organisations or structures established by forced migrants or those communities to which they might wish to return or to resettle.

## 2.5. NGOs' Position Within Civil Society

The various humanitarian actors, donors and academics have over the last decade more frequently taken the term 'civil society' into use. Many NGOs suggest that they are representatives and spokespersons of such a society, while a number of academics caution against such a simplistic understanding of the term. As for an understanding of the term civil society, the UN Secretary-General (1998), who has placed increasing importance on cooperation between the UN and civil society, defines it as 'the sphere in which social movements organize themselves around objectives, constituencies and thematic interests.'

Numerous definitions of 'civil society' do, however, exist. Most of these portray civil society as one part of a three-sector nation state, complementary to the government and business sectors. Seligman (1993), for example, has offered the following definition:

*Civil society refers to that broad class of institutions located between the family and the state, the forums in and through which there is an attempt to harmonize, where necessary, the conflicting demands of individual interest and social good.*

There are varying perceptions of what role a civil society should assume, not least towards the state, and how one is to assess the weaknesses and strengths of any civil society. In conjunction with debates on globalisation and migration one has to question if there are physical limits to a particular civil society, like, for example, within a state or a region, or if it can be seen as extending across borders and thus be international.

There exist, moreover, large differences in the view of whom to include in or exclude from a civil society, or as White (1996: 180-182) observes, 'the term "civil society" has also been hijacked to further various developmental or political projects, each with its own preferred sector of associational life.' He summarises the most current uses of the term civil society to be:

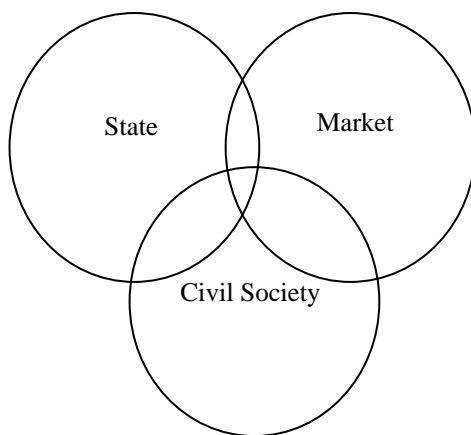
*(...) of an intermediate associational realm between the state and family populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or advance their interests or values.*

This civil society, according to White, would include 'secret or illegal organisations' and Fowler (1997) who has written extensively on NGOs, dryly cautions that 'Civil society is a messy arena of competing claims and interests between groups that do not necessarily like each other.'

Nevertheless, the discussion on civil society has not been confined to recent years, as the term has had a long history in political philosophy. Van Rooy (1998:7) observes that the definition has been altered by Roman, Lockean, Hegelian, Marxist and Gramscian interpretation, until now it 'has become an intellectual industry of its own.' Carothers (1999: 1) explains that in the 1990s 'the global trend towards democracy opened up space for civil society, and ...especially in the developing world, privatization and other market reforms offered civil society the chance to step in as governments retracted their reach.' The academic debate, moreover, was largely influenced by the work of Putnam (1993), and his use of the term 'social capital' to explain how Northern and Southern Italy had developed differently.

Naturally, this debate was of interest to the NGOs, with INTRAC addressing the issue in more detail in 1996 (Clayton 1996), and a number of researchers such as Hadenius (1996), Saltmarshe (1996), Fowler (1997) and Whaites (1998) have explored it further. Van Rooy, as editor of 'Civil Society and the Aid Industry' (1998:12), summarised the debate and drew up six different viewpoints of what the term civil society is frequently defined as. This includes 1) as values and norms; 2) as a collective noun; 3) as a space for action; 4) as a historical moment; 5) as an anti-hegemonic movement; and 6) as an antidote to the state.

The graphic presentation most frequently used to illustrate the relation between the three elements of the nation-state, the state, the market and civil society, as outlined by Van Rooy (1999: 20) is presented below in Box 7.



**Box 7: Modelling Civil Society**

**Source:** Van Rooy (1999)

One should, however, be careful of interpreting this drawing as if these three elements are equally large, equally strong and equally influential, either internally or externally; or that they are fixed in their positions. Fowler (1997: 23) makes a point of the variation in the circles between Northern and Southern countries, where the business sector tends to be the largest in the North and the government sector small, while the government sector is the largest in the South and the business sector rather small. Thus, it could be suggested that the various elements within a civil society, and particularly in a CPE with a rapidly shifting political and military environment,

should be regarded as constantly shifting variables, influenced by internal and external factors, of which humanitarian assistance could be one.

As mentioned in the introduction, there have been attempts to equate civil society with NGOs, a notion Carothers (1999: 1-2) dismisses, as he regards civil society as a broader concept 'encompassing all the organizations and associations that exist outside the state (including political parties) and the market.' He lists a number of organisations, among them ethnic associations, religious organisations, student groups, cultural organisations, sports clubs and even informal community groups. While he recognises that NGOs do play important and growing roles in both developed and developing countries, he expresses caution about the role of 'the scores of new ngos in democratizing countries' as they 'are often dominated by elite-run groups that have only tenuous ties to the citizens on whose behalf they claim to act, and they depend on international funders for budgets they cannot nourish from democratic sources.'

Carothers, in his brief article (1999: 3-5), further points out that a democratic governance system is not necessarily a guarantee for an active civil society; and, on the other hand, that a strong civil society might not ensure democracy. He rejects the notion of a strong civil society, including 'powerful nongovernmental groups' in a 'nearly state-free future' as he concludes: 'civil society and the state need each other and, in the best of worlds, they develop in tandem, not at each other's expense.'

Duffield (Sørbo 1997: 86) adds an important dimension to the debate as he suggests that '[I]t is misleading to think of civil society as a "thing" to be "built". It is better understood as the institutional embodiment of favourable behaviour and attitudinal sentiments: as a social rather than a physical content'.

However, a discussion of the role of NGOs within a civil society in a CPE context is not complete without a brief review of how the roles of the state and the market sector might be limited or transformed due to the conflict that brought about an emergency situation in the first place. A starting point would eventually be to discuss whether the whole notion of civil society is valid in CPEs, because of the limited role the state is able to play, or civil society's ability to influence either the state or an overtly unregulated market sector. Typically, there will be several contenders for state power: a civil society divided along the conflict lines; a market economy that is defined as either a grey or a black market, or actively using the conflict to further the interests of each of the warring parties; or the interests of the various market actors allowed by a lack of regulation of the market sector. A counter-argument would be that essentially the distinction between state, market and civil society would be the same, albeit possibly assuming different roles than in a typical developing country, and that the relationship and interaction between the entities will vary considerably depending on the situation in each CPE. However, military and financial power is certainly a more decisive authority here than an authority derived through democratic elections, and thus civil society's influence over the state (or competing state authorities) is sharply reduced. That would certainly influence the types of interaction between civil society groups and NGOs and any proclaimed state authority.



A study of the relations between states and NGOs (Clark 1992: 151-153) and the ability of NGOs to influence the democratisation of a state identified four interconnected approaches NGOs could apply: project replication; grassroots mobilisation; influencing policy reform; and international advocacy. However, the study acknowledged that the degree to which NGOs choose or are able to influence governments depends on the social and political context of that particular country, whereas emphasis is placed on how different forms of regime create different working environments. Here a distinction is made between a) military and other dictatorships; b) single party states; and c) liberal democracies, where the two first categories of government might certainly be found in CPEs. In the first category it is pointed out that NGOs are 'likely to side with the political opposition or – where opposition and trade unions are banned—to be the opposition, whereas in single-party states more autonomous structures may be mistrusted, and thus the rise of indigenous NGOs might be very slow, or they may never become established. And if the NGO sector becomes too critical it is 'cut off by the government, but if it is quiescent, it simply becomes absorbed by the Party (ibid.).'

This thesis aims at reviewing the work of NGOs in complex political emergencies, where the state function might often range from being authoritarian, weak, contested, fragmented and non-recognised to virtually non-existent, and where the international community, especially for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, places increased importance on collaboration with non-governmental organisations. The rationale ranges from not wishing to support repressive or non-legitimate regimes to acknowledging that NGOs are better placed and equipped to support the population in CPEs. Given the above reservations from Carother on how representative NGOs function in such situations, it seems pertinent to adopt a wide definition of what a civil society might include, and keep in mind its constantly fluctuating power balance. Furthermore, in light of the different forms of civil society outlined by Van Rooy, it is necessary to view the relationship between civil society and the state as a balancing act, the two possibly opposing each other, though not as bodies that can replace each other.

## 2.6. Interaction and Needs Assessment

If one postulates that NGOs, although members of a national and international civil society, are not necessarily representatives of it, one is obliged to look into how the NGOs interact with civil society organisations, communities and individuals on behalf of which they aim to advocate or to which they provide support. This is not least because the bulk of international assistance for forced migrants is provided by international NGOs, often with very limited links to the migrants or limited knowledge of their situation. It is precisely the quality and depth of such interactions, however, which may turn out to be a crucial factor in a NGO's ability to advocate on behalf of a particular group or community; and even more, to formulate projects and programmes that are to meet the needs of groups and individuals, while at the same time acknowledging the various resources they may possess.

### 2.6.1. The Philosophy of Needs Assessment

One basic assumption held in all literature on development and rehabilitation, actually dating back to the writing of progressive colonial administrators in the 1920s and 1930s (Hardiman (1986:54), quoted in Dudley (1993:159)), is a need for the beneficiaries to participate in identification and decision-making (and also implementation) processes on issues concerning their lives and future. That would, certainly, include all forms of humanitarian assistance, advocacy efforts and development-oriented programmes.

A central element in such a participatory approach will be to regard the intended beneficiaries as a main resource for development, rehabilitation or relief work. This would imply their inclusion, as individuals and groups, in processes aimed at making decisions about issues affecting their lives and livelihoods, rather than their only being regarded as anonymous victims in need of assistance from an external humanitarian regime. Development literature is almost in unison in its agreement on this subject, and Martinussen (1997: 42) provides a broad overview of how theories have evolved out of a 'development by people' approach where 'popular participation is a goal in itself', so that it becomes a 'process through which other developmental goals must be defined.' Anthropologists Gardner and Lewis (1997: 93-94) are clear proponents of this direction, although, reflecting on the limitations of such an approach, they state:

*Unless people can take control of their own resources and agendas, development is thus caught in a vicious circle; by 'providing' for others, projects inherently encourage the dependency of recipients on outside funds and workers. Development discourses must therefore be challenged until they recognise that local people are active agents, and by changing their practices enable them to participate in project planning and implementation.*

They caution that the outsiders, the staff of humanitarian agencies 'often fail to recognise the degree to which communities have their own internal form of organisation, decision making and lobbying.'

A review of handbooks and planning tools of UN agencies places an equally strong emphasis on beneficiary involvement and participation, not only in development and rehabilitation situations but also in complex emergencies and with heavy caseloads of forced migrants (see Anderson (1994); UNHCR (undated); UNICEF (1994); UNICEF (2000) and WFP (1999)). As UNHCR emphasises in its Handbook for Emergencies: '[I]nvolve the refugees and promote their self reliance from the start'; and UNICEF reiterates: '[A]s in all matters affecting their well-being, members of the displaced community – including children – should be involved in the design and conduct of the assessment process.' NGOs, many of them implementing UN-funded projects, seem unilaterally to support these principles. The two main instruments developed by NGOs, the International Code of Conduct (IFRC 1994) and the Sphere Project (2000), both emphasise the involvement of beneficiaries in the identification and management of aid processes.

Woodhouse (1998: 128) is, as a development manager, asking the fundamental question: why find out from people? His main argument is that there are two types of information that can be identified by the 'the people' and no one else. Firstly, people

might have *knowledge* that won't be available elsewhere, and, secondly, one might be able to understand individuals or social groups' *perceptions* in their capacity as users of services or resources, and how these are manifested in 'particular patterns of decision-making.'

There are, however, many academics who question the good intentions of participation, and the possibilities for applying such procedures in conflict situations or in CPEs. As a starting point Weiss and Collins (1996) render a more sober view of the realities on the ground, and particularly in conflict situations.

*There is a paradox between wanting to help non-Western victims of war and at the same time appearing not to trust them to administer to their own needs with donated resources. Buried beneath the humanitarian impulse of some external actors may lurk what has been identified in domestic welfare circles as "blaming the victim" for his or her current vulnerability and dependency of outside aid.*

Dudley provides another important contribution to this discourse in 'The Critical Villager' (Dudley 1993), where he questions whether the external demand is for 'community involvement' or rather 'community contribution'. His view is that the relationship between providers and beneficiaries is in any case marked by the fact that as the providers control the resources this results in an uneven and often NGO-controlled contribution process. Woodhouse (1998: 144-45), making use of examples from Mali, and quoting Moore (1995: 29), observes that 'public participatory research methods are unlikely to prove good instruments for the analysis of local power relations since they are shaped by the very relations which are being investigated;' thus Woodhouse concludes that tools like Participatory Rapid Appraisals (PRA) must be complemented by other sources of information gathering, in a less public social context, to ensure adequate triangulation. Johnson and Mayoux (1998: 149) support this view, although they include PRA as an important research tool when discussing participatory research approaches. They dwell on the issue of power relations within empowerment processes, questioning how groups often referred to as disadvantaged in social relations (such as the poor, women, children, old people, the disabled or particular ethnic groups) can be included in the empowerment processes; this means distinguishing between 'power to' as an ability to change the condition of one's existence, 'power over' as control over other people, and 'power with' as ability to achieve control through joint actions with others. Bearing in mind the focus over the last decade on a more gender-balanced assessment process, Johnson and Mayoux (1998: 169), drawing on Dent (1999: 22), suggest six questions to be asked to establish whether women (or any other subordinate group) have been included or excluded from the investigative process, looking at:

- *Timing:* are women able to join in the activities?
- *Location:* where are women allowed to meet? Where will they feel comfortable and able to speak?
- *Representation:* are women represented on the PRA team?
- *Relevance:* are issues covered which are relevant to women? Are there issues relevant to some women which are excluded?

- *Equal roles:* are women able to have an equal voice in mixed meetings, perhaps with the facilitator's help? Or will separate meetings for men and women be more effective?
- *Marginalised women:* are minority groups of women, such as widows, divorcees, disabled, and the elderly, seen and heard?

Johnson and Mayoux's conclusion (1998: 171) is that such processes might not in all instances be empowering for the participants, but could rather make them extremely vulnerable 'if sensitive information enters the public arena, or if knowledge and understanding which enables marginalized people to cope with difficult social situations is appropriated by others already more powerful than themselves.'

Another type of concern is presented by Hulme and Edwards (1997: 10), who question the sincerity of donors that increasingly claim to integrate participation into their methodologies, through 'stakeholder involvement' and the use of participatory rural appraisals (PRA), when it comes to the 'theoretical incompatibilities between donor rhetoric and donor practice'. Their worry is that 'the adoption of "NGO speak" by donors may have more to do with the need for aid agencies to improve their public image than change their practice.' They do not seem to be alone in having such worries. A team of researchers at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex, UK, termed the Participation Group (IDS 2000), explains a similar resentment among researchers and practitioners that is worth noting.

*Participation, they would contend, has become a legitimating device, drawing on the moral authority of claims to involve the poor in defining and pursuing their own development to place the pursuit of other agendas beyond reproach. For them, much of what is hailed as "participation" consists of a mere technical fix that leaves unchallenged the global and local relations of inequality in which poverty and powerlessness remain embedded.*

Chambers, the founder of the PRA method (detailed later in this chapter), is himself critical of how participatory methods have been applied, and he cautions that they could be used either as a cosmetic label, a co-opting practice or an empowering process, with the latter the only acceptable norm (Chambers 1994).

There certainly is an ongoing general theoretical debate on aspects of participation in development discourse; see Rahnema (1992), Mohan (2000) and Nelson and Wright (1995), who question the notion of a conflict-free and harmonious community where people are free to identify and prioritise their needs. However, the literature review has not identified academic work discussing or contesting the importance of participation of the intended beneficiaries in humanitarian assistance undertaken by NGOs and UN agencies in CPEs. The identified literature, including the mentioned UN and NGO handbooks, rather underlines the importance of participation and the use of participatory approaches to solicit the views of the intended beneficiaries. Or as Good (1996: 6) concludes: '[T]hese approaches are useful for assessing the local population's understanding of their situation in preparedness for participative program design and for implementation of longer-term development project(s).' Such views are also the finding of a workshop organised by the Institute of Development Studies (Scott-Villiers 2000:10), although the conclusion acknowledged that their '[E]nthusiasm for participatory approaches was tempered by a clearer understanding of just how strong are the political forces at play in

emergency settings, and how easily well-intentioned people can be manipulated by these forces.'

### **2.6.2. Author's Field Observations**

The reflections cited above echo observations made by the author while working with humanitarian agencies and when undertaking evaluations of UN and NGO projects in a number of countries, including CPEs. There appear to be two main sets of arguments questioning the relevance and applicability of the use of participatory methods in CPE or disaster situations. One set of arguments is centred on people's ability and willingness to take part in participatory processes and needs assessments, while the other set focuses on the limitations on the ability of aid agencies to deliver the needed assistance, and people's consequent reactions to such shortcomings.

#### *Ability and Willingness to Participate*

One frequently-heard argument is that people escaping a traumatic event (such as when arriving at a refugee camp) will not be able to articulate their needs or acknowledge what resources they might hold. There is an argument that in such situations (often termed day 1), rather than being bothered with questions that cannot be properly answered, they would be better cared for by agencies providing them with standard packages (such as tents, water and food). Only when they have been able to settle down and reorient themselves (day 2) will they be in a position where they can be useful counterparts for the aid workers seeking information from them. Secondly, there seems to be a widespread notion that people might not have time to spend on interacting with humanitarian agencies, especially for lengthy PRA sessions, when they are busy saving their lives and securing their families in a crisis and emergency situation. A statement made by an NGO director in Kabul in the mid-1990s was that his staff did not have time to talk with people whilst they were busy attempting to save their lives. Thirdly, the question is whether people arriving at a new location or receiving aid workers in their home areas for the first time will have enough trust in relief workers to allow for a wider and more participatory engagement with them. The role of women is a case in point here, particularly in cultures where they traditionally have been largely confined to the family sphere with limited interaction with 'outsiders'. Arguably, the methodology the NGOs adopt for interaction would be instrumental in establishing a certain degree of trust.

#### *NGOs Ability 'To Deliver'*

There is, moreover, a series of concerns raised by humanitarian agencies operating in CPEs which have experienced difficulties in securing funding for their projects and programmes, particularly those frequently termed 'forgotten emergencies'. The knowledge of the increased difficulties of raising funds has shifted downwards in the organisations and made field staff more reluctant to invite intended beneficiaries into their preparations and planning, thus prompting a general reluctance to engage with the local population before or during assistance provision. There are two main arguments being made:

Frequently heard is a fear of raising expectations among intended beneficiaries, through interviews and dialogue questioning them about their needs, that later cannot be met. Many are afraid such forms of interaction raise false promises of the possibility of support, and might alienate the communities towards the NGOs if support is not forthcoming. There appears to be a limited exchange of surveys and needs assessments between humanitarian agencies as they all need it for their own fundraising; thus each agency setting out on its own needs assessment missions seems to compound the problem.

Possibly due to such concerns, or simply to reduce their own workload, or feeling that they do understand the local situation, a frequently heard explanation from humanitarian workers is that ‘their needs are so obvious, there is no need to ask them about it’. One contributing factor to such an attitude might be identified in a more *rights-based approach* to needs assessment, where priority is placed on the assistance the intended beneficiaries are entitled to according to more universal standards derived from international human rights and humanitarian law (such as education and access to health facilities). These will then be the obvious needs to be met, although they might not necessarily be the needs identified or prioritised by the intended beneficiaries themselves. However, by humanitarian workers not asking the beneficiaries for their views and allowing them to prioritise, this possible contradiction between needs- and rights-based approaches might possibly escape identification (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001). Thus, agencies with very specific mandates bestowed upon them by the international community might continue their operations despite the fact that their services might not be that much in demand or seen as a priority by the local communities.

Arguably, much of the NGOs’ ability to make judgements on these issues will depend on the degree of trust they manage to build with the local communities. And here again, one might assume that the reputation of the NGOs, an understanding of their intentions and goals and the attitude and behaviour of the NGOs’ staff might determine the level of trust and open interaction that can possibly be established.

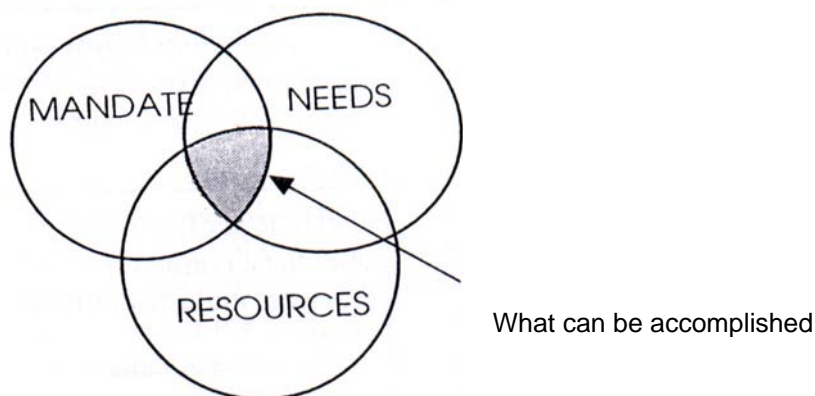
### 2.6.3. Tools for Interaction and Needs Assessment

As we have established that there is a general agreement on the need for a structured interaction between the NGOs and their intended beneficiaries, we need to look further at the tools the humanitarian agencies make use of in such processes. This is often termed a needs assessment, defined by Witkin and Altschuld (1995: 4) as ‘a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about program or organisational improvements and allocation of resources.’ Or, as a recent evaluation on needs and vulnerability within the UN system (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001) suggests:

*(...)needs assessment contains two parts: identification of relevant standards (what ought to be), and how realities differ (what is). The standards may be identified by the beneficiaries (through various forms of participatory involvement in the process), or derived from technical or normative standards independently determined (e.g. medical standards for malnutrition, human rights standards for political, social and economic rights).*

The standards could then be derived from international law, or the above-mentioned Sphere project, and should be universally applicable. This would include guidelines for how many litres of water a family should receive per day, measurement of malnutrition levels and the contents of a food ration. Questions have been raised about how wise it is to develop such guidelines; Leader has been a principal questioner (Leader 1999; 1999) on the academic side, while several NGOs have voiced concern that they might not be in a position to deliver the quantity of assistance to the beneficiaries defined as their rights.

This draws us back to the mandates and resources that are available for the different types of NGO involved in assisting people with various needs, and thus to what needs the various NGOs will attempt to identify. There must obviously be quite a large difference between needs identified by an *operational* NGO and an *advocacy* NGO, but possibly more so between NGOs specialising in certain fields, such as health, and those that attempt to engage in more general community development programmes. The former are more technically oriented in their needs assessment; the latter attempt to generate a broader overview of the scope of needs within a certain area and population range and prioritise these. Good (1996: 9) presents an illustration in Box 8 below that exemplifies the meeting-point between agencies' mandates, their (and the local communities') access to resources and the needs of the population, defining the common area as what can be accomplished.



**Box 8:** *Common Ground*

**Source:** Good, 1996

The needs, and arguably people's perception of these, will vary between different societies and given situations, and furthermore, be influenced by who identifies them and how this process is managed and presented. Needs assessment can then arguably encompass a range of activities undertaken by humanitarian agencies to identify types and ranges of need among their intended beneficiaries. But, given the fact that there is a large diversity among NGOs there are certainly also different needs assessment methods and ways to quantify needs. An illustrative example is measurement of malnutrition; UNICEF pointed out that different agencies presented different opinions as to how seriously malnourished a camp population in Northern Afghanistan was, depending on variations in their assessment methodology (IRIN 2001; Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 13). This points to limitations on the exchange of assessment data between agencies applying different assessment methods if the

underlying data collection methodology is not presented. In addition, agencies are often reluctant to share such information anyway as they are intending to use it for their own fundraising activity, to ensure that their specific organisation is the one to tap into the resources that might be made available by donors to meet the need of this particular group.

However, what can be established at this stage is that there are two different approaches to needs assessment. The first is *organisation centred* and more technically oriented, limited to the specific mandate of the NGO involved, where very quantifiable data is gathered to measure a certain and limited level of need for the services this organisation can provide; or what has been defined as a right of the beneficiaries to receive, as defined within the mandate and resource availability of the specific NGO, or as derived from international humanitarian law. Thus, in reality, there is less need, with this approach, to include the intended beneficiaries in the process to have their views, but rather only to be able to measure their situation and compare it to organisational or international norms. The second approach is *beneficiary centred*, where the aim is to map the broader needs of the population, and allow the intended beneficiaries to partake not only in the data gathering but also in setting the priorities. This could then certainly include the types of need identified in the first approach to needs assessment, but would also have to be open to all kinds of need the local communities might identify and prioritisations they might make, rather than just attempting to fulfil what has been defined as their international rights. The leading theoretician (and practitioner) in the *beneficiary* (and participatory) centred field has been Robert Chambers (1983; 1997). Chambers not only pointed out the five most frequently encountered biases<sup>22</sup> that limited interaction between external aid agents and local communities, he further suggested a methodology to overcome these restraints, which became known as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).<sup>23</sup> This, according to Chambers (1994: 153), is ‘a family of approaches and methods to enable local (rural and urban) people to express, enhance, share and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and act.’ According to Chambers (1997: 158), the principles of PRA are mainly epistemological, to do with obtaining information and gaining knowledge. The additional principles are, however, more personal, to do with behaviour, attitudes and self-awareness. This contrast indicates the emphasis PRA puts on how outsiders interact with local people, or makes them the teachers, as Martinussen (1997: 176) describes this process.

In its many varying forms and versions PRA rapidly gained influence among humanitarian agencies and donors, as it provided field staff with a methodology for interacting with local communities, and established a set of principles for those organising such interaction. Chambers (1997: 157–158) summarised these as: 1) hand over the stick (or pen or chalk); 2) have a self-critical awareness; 3) take

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<sup>22</sup> These biases were 1) spatial (visits near cities, on roadsides, and to the centre of villages, to the neglect of the peripheries); 2) project (where projects were being undertaken, often with special official attention and support); 3) personal (meeting men more than women, elites more than the poor, the user more than the non-user of services, and so on); 4) seasonal (going in the dry and cool rather than hot and wet seasons which are often worse for poor rural people); and 5) diplomatic (where the outsider does not wish to cause offence by asking to meet poor people or see bad conditions) (Chambers, 1997: 111).

<sup>23</sup> Chambers argues that his work grew out of research undertaken at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, 1977–1979 (Chambers, 1997: 112).



personal responsibility; 4) be sharing. And where emphasis was on the members of the local communities, for them to become actors and analysts, while those representing the humanitarian or development agencies were the outsiders, whose role was to be conveyors and facilitators.

The further development of PRA took on a life of its own, and has mainly been carried through by local NGOs and community-based institutions in many parts of the South, particularly in India. However, with such a rapid spread of PRA, initially intended for rural development programmes, the method was applied in a range of different ways, partly because it was adapted to different settings but also due to the fact that not all NGO staff members actually grasped the full content of the methodology, or carried out a more rapid version of it. However, as donors gradually started to demand that local communities were consulted before projects were drawn up, PRA became a household name in the NGO community. In a thorough review of the development of PRA throughout the 1980s and 1990s Chambers (1997: 213-214) listed a range of frequently observed errors while following the processes in different countries and situations: 1) domination; 2) rushing; 3) routines and ruts; 4) gender and upper to upper bias; 5) taking without giving; and 6) raising unmet expectations.

There have been a few critical comments on the PRA concept; some have argued that staff might become less flexible and not observe important issues or features of the village or community they relate to if the PRA becomes a straightjacket rather than an innovative tool for interaction.<sup>24</sup> Kapoor (2002:101), moreover, in one of the most recent articles critiquing PRA, raises concern that the technical part, and the focus on methodology, might overshadow questions of legitimacy, justice, power and the politics of gender and difference in the communities. Others have questioned whether PRA, and particularly the mapping sessions, can be undertaken in a conflict area or in a community with large internal conflicts, as there might not be a normal and stable situation within these communities, but rather certain groups who might have come to dominate others due to newly won military or political superiority.

But there is more to participatory methods than just PRA. This tool grew out of the use of more common data collection methods, with different forms of open, semi-structured or structured interviews, either with individuals, groups or focus groups, that were seen as time-consuming and ‘with the analysis mainly done by “us”’ as (Chambers 1999) explains. Good (1996), providing a list of assessment approaches for emergency situations, notes a tool developed by Mary B. Anderson for UNHCR, termed People Oriented Planning (1994), particularly aimed at assessing emergency settlement populations through a three-step process. This will then bring about 1) a refugee profile and context, 2) an activities analysis, and 3) a resource analysis, with the aim of being able to support existing community structures rather than ignore them or even work against them. This methodology draws heavily on an analytic framework presented in a very influential book ‘Rising from the Ashes’ (Anderson and Woodrow 1989), advocating the use of development strategies in disaster situations. The main thesis these authors present is that people who have gone through a disaster are not merely ‘victims’; they are to be participants in their own recovery, albeit made more vulnerable due to past/ongoing disaster, so there is a need

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<sup>24</sup> UN staff in Kabul made this argument during preparation for a project review in the mid 1990s.

to recognise both their *capacities* and their *vulnerabilities* when planning for an intervention to assist them.

An important part of their discourse is around language definitions and what to term people affected by disasters. The authors list what aid agencies most frequently call them, which includes ‘victims’, ‘survivors’, ‘recipients’, ‘clients’, ‘beneficiaries’ and ‘target population’, but argue forcefully for the use of the term ‘participants’, as, while external agencies might help and donors might contribute, in the end ‘the people who live in the situation must take ultimate responsibility, and they gain the advantages or suffer from the mistakes of their and the donor’s actions’ (Anderson and Woodrow 1989: 61).

The book does, furthermore, provide an important distinction between ‘vulnerabilities’ and ‘needs’, where the authors argue that ‘[V]ulnerabilities refer to the *long-term factors* which affect the ability of a community to respond to events or which make it susceptible to calamities. Needs, as used in disaster context, refer to immediate requirements for survival or recovery from a calamity’ (1989: 10). And thus an argument is made that to avoid increasing vulnerabilities ‘it is necessary to identify capacities in order to know what strengths exist within a society – even among disaster victims – on which future development can be built’ (1989: 11), and they also suggest that well-organised and cohesive societies and groups sharing strong ideologies or belief systems or past experiences of successful cooperation might be better able to help both themselves and others, even when struck by disasters, than unorganised or divided communities and groups. This leads them to present an analysis matrix, where vulnerabilities and capacities are identified on three levels, being:

- Physical/material (what productive resources, skills and hazards exist?)
- Social/organisational (what are the relations and organisations among people?)
- Motivational/attitudinal (how does the community view its ability to create change?)

Anderson and Woodrow’s argument is that by applying this matrix to various programme options, and thus identifying their impacts on capacities and vulnerabilities, the agencies will be able to determine how needs might be met ‘in ways that contribute to development in the long term’ (1989: 23).

While this is highly relevant for CPEs it is worth noticing that although the authors here present a useful framework for agencies to measure what needs might be most important to meet, when vulnerabilities and capacities are summarised they do not provide any methodology for interaction with the ‘participants’, despite the importance placed on their engagement in their recovery. Their emphasis is rather on coordination among agencies, an issue addressed in the next chapter, although they share the basic empowerment vision that is the foundation for the PRA, or as they describe it ‘[B]oth relief and development programs should be more concerned with increasing local capacities and reducing vulnerabilities than with providing goods, services, or technical assistance’ (Anderson and Woodrow 1989: 97).

When one wishes to review how NGOs, and other humanitarian organisations, identify and address the needs of forced migrants there is both a philosophical as

well as a practical orientation to the subject. Or, in other words, why would one wish to identify these needs, and what is the best way to do it? But before closing this chapter, it seems important to dwell on the subject of needs, namely, methods to identify the protection needs of forced migrants. In Chapter 1 the range of rights of forced migrants highlighted, *inter alia*, the right to protection as stated in a range of conventions, and not only the right to receive material assistance. This, in itself, is a challenge since the majority of the NGOs are service providers not geared to upholding rights and providing protection to forced migrants, which the Rwanda and Kosovo experience seems to have demonstrated (Suhrke 2000). Although one can argue that protection needs could be grouped under the types of need that are *rights-based* and thus derived from international humanitarian law, and possibly then do not need elaborate methodologies to determine the violations and the degree of such, it should still be of concern that none of the participatory methods for needs assessment reviewed in this chapter seems to address such categories of ‘non-material’ needs, as protection issues, or the possible conflict that might arise when prioritisation (within the local population or within and among agencies) is to be made between assistance provision or advocacy activities.

## 2.7. Conclusion

Not only are the NGOs a highly diverse group, with no one in the international arena holding any power to determine if an organisation is to be allowed to term itself an NGO or not; they are also without any common or internationally derived mandate that provides them with the authority to intervene in any given situation or country. There is not one definition of NGOs that is able to capture the exact meaning of the word; rather there is categorisation of types of organisation to be defined as NGOs and a description of certain commonalities.

There are, then, several interwoven developments that have led to an increase in the number and influence of the NGO sector over the last years. When the number of internal conflicts increased following the end of the Cold War, so did the number of forced migrants, putting pressure on the refugee policy of Western governments and a subsequent strategy to contain forced migrants within their country or area of origin. Here NGOs, through their multiple mandates and approaches, and willingness and ability to provide humanitarian assistance in war and conflict situations, proved themselves useful both for the forced migrants and for Western governments and the international humanitarian regime.

That, however, often led them into conflict with the state authorities of the countries in which they were providing assistance, and questions were raised as to whether uncritically delivered, or biased, humanitarian assistance could do harm, by fuelling or prolonging conflicts. When the United Nations provided a clause allowing for ‘humanitarian intervention’, at times undertaken by military troops, focus fell on forced migrants’ rights to be protected and assisted in accordance with international law and human rights instruments, and the role of NGOs in such rights based approaches.

An important part of such a discourse is to determine to what extent the NGOs do know the situation and needs of those they set out to assist, and if they are to be

regarded as representatives of this group, in this case forced migrants, or at least spokespersons for them. Here, methods for NGO consultation and participation with intended beneficiaries come under scrutiny, to establish the degree, on the one hand, of the NGO sector's knowledge about intended beneficiaries and their resources and needs and, on the other hand, the intended beneficiaries' influence over processes and decisions made on their behalf.

The increase in the number of NGOs, and increased competition for funds and debates on how professional (or unprofessional) the NGO sector had become, led to two distinct discourses within the NGO community. One was initiated by larger and well-established NGOs on different types of self-regulating mechanism, to ensure a certain conformity for rules of engagement and standards to be adhered to. The other related to the coordination of humanitarian agencies and assistance to avoid duplication and ensure better utilisation and targeting of available resources. This discourse was not limited to the NGO sector only, but drew wide attention among IGOs, UN agencies, donors and other international institutions, and will be the focus of the next chapter, where a range of questions relating to the term and the way coordinated efforts are organised is examined.

### **3. NGO Coordination: the Lag between Theory and Practice**

This Chapter starts with a critical introduction to NGO coordination before presenting a review of definitions and theories on coordination. This leads into an overview of NGO established coordination arrangements for emergency situations, the issue of forced or facilitated coordination is discussed before details are provided on how NGO coordination might be organised in complex political emergencies.

As the UN Secretary General noted, NGO coordination does not take place in isolation. NGOs have to relate to other organisations and different coordination structures when coordinating their humanitarian efforts. Thus, UN and donor coordination history and present arrangements are discussed, leading into a more detailed review of the international coordination superstructure, before a presentation is made of the relationship between UN agencies and NGOs and the difference between ‘operational’ and ‘strategic’ coordination is discussed.

Then follows an overview of international NGO coordination arrangements before case studies from Aceh, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sri Lanka is drawn on for a presentation of what characterises nationally based NGO coordination arrangements. Variations in coordination arrangements, different coordination activities and the degree of formality these have are then reviewed before different coordination levels and actors involved are presented.

This leads into a discussion about the inclusion of forced migrants in coordination arrangements and the ways in which complex political emergencies might influence the establishment and management of NGO coordinating bodies.

#### **3.1. A Critical Introduction**

When reviewing the literature on the coordination of humanitarian assistance one finds, on the one hand, a very high expectation of what such coordination might be able to achieve in improving the delivery of such assistance, while, on the other hand, much criticism is levelled against organisational inefficiency and the humanitarian agencies’ reluctance to be coordinated. ‘NGO coordination is like herding cats’ is a frequently overheard statement in the field, although many expressing such reservations might still agree with a statement made by E. Smith in Weiss and Minear (1993):

*A prerequisite to improving the international aid community’s management of conflict-born disasters is coordination. Relief agencies frequently fail to work in tandem, but instead compete for resources and responsibilities. The various*

*agencies of the international humanitarian community will become effective only when they abandon the pretence of cooperation for an acknowledgement of their differences and a willingness to collaborate.*

This view is echoed by Uvin (1999: 18) when he discusses, more specifically, efforts for peacebuilding:

*All documents on peace-building stress the need for improved co-ordination: there is no single need more emphasised, whether by the DAC Guidelines, the UN Secretary-General, or scholars. Co-ordination is generally seen as crucial in a coherent strategy of incentives and disincentives for peace, and for leading to a more efficient use of scarce resources.*

Nor did the United Nations Secretary General have any doubts about the importance he placed on the coordination of humanitarian efforts when he addressed the UN Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) in 1997:

*The most important challenge facing the humanitarian community remains the provision of coherent, effective, and timely assistance to those in need. Improved coordination among and between national bodies, the United Nations and the international community is essential to serve those in need.*

Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 17) provide a timely reminder that, to be judged successful, coordination needs to ‘add value to a humanitarian operation by providing better quality and more effective and efficient responses to help those in need than would be done in its absence.’

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the benefits attributed to effective coordination have actually proved rather difficult to achieve, for several reasons. Barnes (1998: 7) rather bluntly articulates her experience in Mozambique when she states that ‘[C]oordination as applied by the United Nations, NGOs, donors and national authorities is one of the most overused and misunderstood concepts in the development dictionary. Its meaning varies depending on which of the stakeholders is employing it at a given moment’, and she continues, ‘[T]he various stakeholders jockey to place their agency at the forefront of the process – positioning to enhance their own legitimacy and subsequent fundraising capacities.’ Weiss and Collins (1996) point to a general reluctance among humanitarian agencies to submit themselves to a coordination arrangement with the observation that ‘[I]n a sense, St. Augustine’s prayer appropriately describes the attitude of many U.N. officials towards coordination and reform “Lord, make me pure, but not now”. Like St. Augustine, everyone is for coordination, but no one wishes to be coordinated, not just now.’

Uvin (op.cit. 19), synthesizing research from a number of CPEs, is rather precise when he identifies reasons for the failure of coordination:

*The lack of co-ordination is partly due to widely recognised factors: the multitude of actors, often numbering in the hundreds and including many transient ones (most dramatically exemplified in Bosnia and Rwanda); the high cost in time and money that effective co-ordination entails; the need for donors to satisfy their own constituencies and serve their national interests; competition for influence and visibility between donors; and the general unwillingness of actors to limit their margin for manoeuvre by the discipline*

*of co-ordination. Note that multilateral agencies and international NGOs share most of these problems, with the additional problem that the financing structures of humanitarian and development assistance place them in competition with each other.*

Turning to the NGO sector, Smillie (1997: 240) seems in agreement with Uvin when he summarises their challenges, stating ‘[O]ne of the greatest practical problems facing NGOs today is the fragmentation of effort, the hundreds of look-alike organizations spawned more by ego than goodwill, and maintained more by charity than by clarity of purpose. Fragmentation is the amateur’s friend.’

## 3.2. Defining Coordination

Apart from the two books written by Jon Bennett, ‘NGO Coordination at Field Level: A Handbook’ (1994) and ‘Meeting Needs: NGO Coordination in Practice’ (1995), there is a lack of comprehensive reviews of NGO coordination. These two books, however, are empirically rich and give details of how NGO coordination arrangements have been established and function in different parts of the world and in response to different humanitarian situations, as well as providing suggestions for improvement. Bennett’s latest academic contribution (Bennett 2000) focuses on NGO coordination in emergencies and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Beyond this work by Bennett, there are a few articles dealing with difficulties in NGO relationships with national authorities, of which Van Brabant’s presentations from Sri Lanka (1997; 1997) are particularly illustrative. Van Brabant has also later drawn on his extensive NGO experience from different parts of the world when formulating two papers presenting and discussing a framework for understanding, promoting and evaluating humanitarian coordination (Van Brabant 1999; 2001).

However, while NGO coordination is understudied, there is a much richer body of work on UN coordination, including reflections on the UN agencies’ relationship with NGOs. Among these is an occasional paper written by Antonio Donini (1996), termed ‘The Politics of Mercy: UN coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda’, and an evaluation report by Donini, Dudley and Oxwell (1996), ‘Coordination in a Fragmented State’, reviewing the experience, successes and failures of UN in Afghanistan, while Barnes (1998) discusses humanitarian coordination in Mozambique. Reindorp and Wiles (2001) have undertaken a more recent study of OCHA’s field coordination and Duffield, Gossman et al. (2001) have recently reviewed the wider UN coordination mechanism, the Strategic Framework, in Afghanistan. Disch (1999) has furthermore made a valuable contribution on coordination between donor and international institutions, attempting to set parameters to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of such coordination arrangements.

### 3.2.1. Theories on Coordination

Among the academic contributions listed above are numerous descriptions of coordination arrangements and of failures of coordination. Much less is found regarding theories which attempt to explain coordination and the function of coordination arrangements between or within organisations, or which consider how

coordinated efforts might enhance the quality of work and organisational effectiveness. However, enough has been identified from various research fields to help establish a working definition of NGO coordination that can distinguish it from NGO 'cooperation' and 'collaboration'.

If we start with a language definition, the English Dictionary (Collins Cobuild 1995) defines *coordination* as 'the organisation of the activities of two or more groups in such a way that each may work more efficiently and be aware of what the other group(s) are doing.'

Robinson, Hewitt et al. (2000: 7) discuss coordination as one of three alternatives for inter-organisational relationships in a developmental context, the others being competition or cooperation, and define it as 'a way to bring together disparate agencies to make their efforts more compatible (in the interest of equity, effectiveness and efficiency).' At the same time, they warn that '[W]ithout co-ordination, the danger is of lapsing into chaos and inefficiency.' They do, however, primarily discuss coordination in development situations, where they define the state as the coordinator of 'an array of social and economic activities.'

Hvinden (1994: 5-6) compares integration in the welfare bureaucracies in Norway and Scotland, where cooperation, collaboration and coordination are discussed as different forms of integration. He defines coordination, in this context, as 'the process whereby two units are brought to operate together in a (more) harmonious way'. But he warns that this concept is only meaningful when these units 'are presupposed to act in a coordinated manner', and drawing on Katz and Kahn (1978: 106) he argues that 'one may create additional problems for an organisation by seeking coordination of all activities, for instance by causing delays in decisions to the point of no return.' Hvinden sets coordination aside from cooperation and collaboration as he argues that these two forms of integration primarily relate to achieving a particular goal, through execution of a particular task (cooperation) or through working together on a joint task (collaboration), although he warns that such distinctions 'may also become a semantic trap where denotative and connotative, normative and factual, formal and informal, elements are mixed.'

Within the vast literature on organisational management Handy (1999: 205), like Hvinden, although on more general management terms, discusses coordination and integration as mechanisms to form links within a larger organisation and thereby to manage diversity. Handy defines coordinators within an organisation as '[G]roups and individuals given the responsibility for liaison but not for managerial control.' He, however, warns against 'cluttering up the organization with unnecessary co-ordinating mechanisms' and, further, points out that '[T]he most pertinent issues in the management of diversity appear to be distribution of power, match of culture and structure and the increasingly important issue of the outside diversity' (1999: 265).

Van Brabant (1999: 13), when discussing humanitarian coordination, does not provide a definition, but instead underlines that coordination should be discussed as a process rather than as a 'blueprint', arguing that 'coordination is not an end to in itself but an attempt to enhance the quality and impact of the international intervention in and on these conflicts.' The lack of a clear framework in which to



understand and pursue coordination is judged by Van Brabant to be a major obstacle to coordinated humanitarian efforts.

Minear, Chellia et al. (1992), quoted in Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 6), when discussing UN coordination, state that

*Coordination is the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include strategic planning, gathering data and managing information, mobilising resources and ensuring accountability, orchestrating a functional division of labour, negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities and providing leadership.*

Before entering into a discussion on how to define NGO coordination in complex political emergencies, it could prove useful to dwell on the distinctions made between coordination and other forms of organisational and inter-organisational integration and interaction, looking specifically into how competition between different organisations fits into this pattern.

Robinson, Hewitt et al. (2000) use a model of hierarchical structures and authority to compare coordination and cooperation. They see coordination within such hierarchies as ‘a relationship of power (which can be used and abused) and the coordinator (be it the state or other agent) can be monolithic and coercive against the wishes of those being coordinated’. Cooperation, in their view, ‘tends to be associated with voluntary organizations, as non-hierarchical and with all parties involved on an equal basis with each other’, and as they further argue, ‘assumes power based on knowledge, expertise and/or contribution, rather than power derived from role and function in a hierarchy.’ To illustrate the different levels of common associations between the different terms, they present the table derived from a civil society framework that is reproduced in Table 3 below.

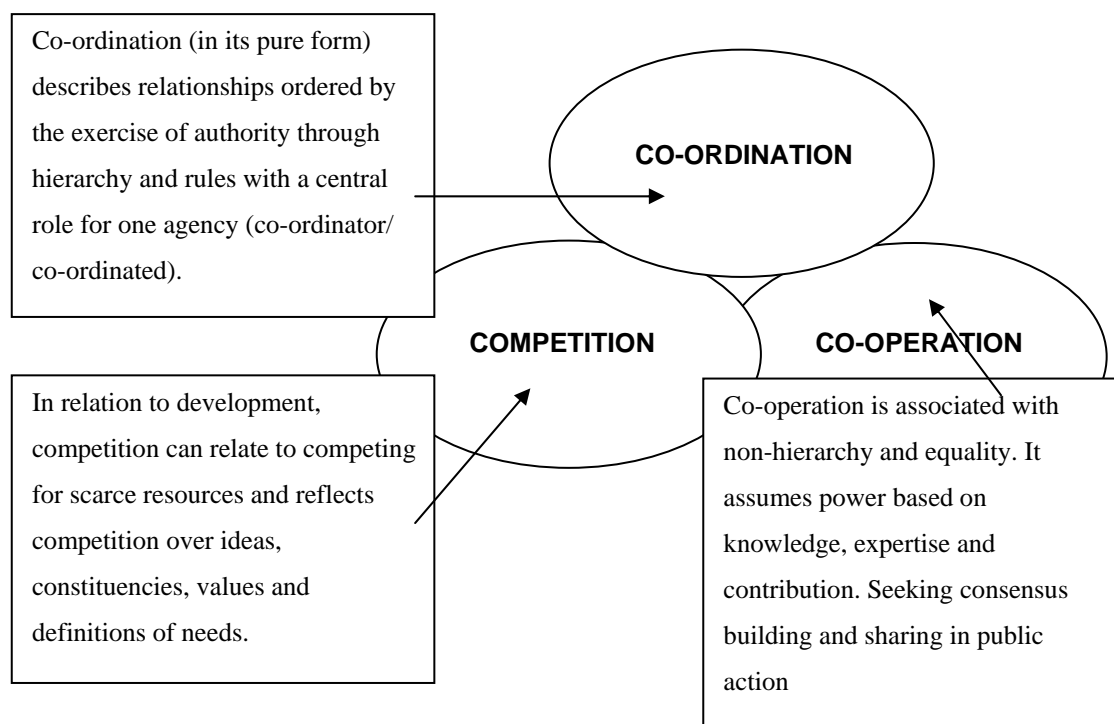
	<b>Institutional framework</b>	<b>Ways of organising</b>	<b>Organisational type</b>
<b>Competition</b>	Market	Suppliers and consumers through price mechanisms	Firms
<b>Co-ordination</b>	State	Government and citizens through voting mechanisms hierarchy; rule based administrative control	Government offices, from central to local
<b>Co-operation</b>	Civil society	Voluntary initiatives and social movements through identification of common goals, values and needs	NGO, trade unions, community groups, etc.

**Table 3:** Common Associations of Competition, Co-ordination and Co-operation.

**Source:** Robinson, Hewitt et al. 2000

The authors insist that ‘co-ordination is about control through authority, which can either be imposed or agreed. Leadership can be volunteered by one party and

voluntarily accepted by others', although, in the end, '[C]o-ordination is about trying to take a rational approach in situations where there are a number of centres (albeit different) of power' (Robinson, Hewitt et al. 2000: 215-216). Drawing on this assumption Banham (2001) has prepared a model outlining the relationship between these three 'Cs', see Box 9 below.



**Box 9:** Relationship between Coordination, Cooperation and Competition

**Source:** Banham 2001

Interestingly, in the same book Bennett (2000: 169-171) explicitly argues against this general concept of an authoritarian coordinator when it comes to NGO coordination arrangements. Underlining NGOs' independence from governments and UN agencies Bennett suggests that NGO coordination arrangements will have horizontal rather than hierarchical structures, refusing to be forced into structures in which decisions might be imposed on them.

### 3.2.2. Coordination in Emergency Situations

The issue of inter-organisational coordination during emergencies was discussed in more detail during an international conference organised by the University of Wisconsin Disaster Management Center (1996: topic 5, p. 2), where it was suggested that, in such situations, the primary objective of inter-organisational coordination was 'to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian response so that the response meets the needs of the affected population to the maximum extent possible'.

Their argument is that such coordination can lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness by

- Identifying gaps and duplication in services and overlapping mandates.

- Agreeing on comparative advantages and division of labour among agencies.
- Establishing common and consistent policies, standards and codes of conduct.
- Developing areas and sectors where agencies work together.

The conference report comments on a further range of issues, while noting that, '[O]rganisations will commit to coordination when the coordination goals, objectives and activities help promote their individual organizational interests and missions.' They argue further that the coordination of humanitarian efforts requires specific organisational and negotiation skills among the personnel involved, that the type of coordination arrangement will vary with each stage and type of emergency, that participation and consensus will be the model of decision-making within coordination arrangements, and that there is a need for strategic planning and to link up with host governments as long as these do not repress their own people or manipulate aid. The workshop report finally argues that coordination 'should be based on the principles of local control or include a mechanism to evolve to local control as soon as feasible' (University of Wisconsin Disaster Management Center (1996: 4).

### **3.2.3. Forced or Facilitated Coordination**

When considering forced or facilitated coordination, it is helpful to discuss the horizontal arrangements that Bennett argues are the dominant feature of NGO coordination and which, according to him, 'depend on the coexistence of autonomy and interdependence', and where 'the juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal organisational forms, particularly in the relationship between NGOs and governments or NGOs and the UN, may create conflict and competition' (Bennett 2000: 171). He is of the view that, in the absence of a functional nation state, which as earlier documented is the case in many CPEs, it is squarely the responsibility of the UN and the NGOs to prevent duplication and rationalise the division of labour among assistance providers. In this case, a separate NGO coordination structure might be a useful tool for the NGOs to achieve that end. Bennett furthermore addresses the issue of power within coordination arrangements, although discussing it more as 'power to' rather than 'power over' in his horizontal model, when he suggest that 'coordination is also about power – power to determine the allocation of resources, to exert influence over warring parties, governments and, let it be said, recipients' (2000: 172).

A discussion of power relations and authority leads naturally to a discussion of the difference between 'imposed' or 'agreed' authority as Robinson, Hewitt et al. (2000) describe it, or 'forced' or 'facilitated' coordination as it is frequently termed. Minear (2002) refers to coordination by command or coordination by consensus, although he also adds a category of coordination by default. Van Brabant (op. cit. 16) identifies it as a "coordination by argument" rather than "coordination by authority" approach', while Bennett (2000: 171-172), as discussed above, more or less rejects the notion of a forced element in NGO coordination in emergency situations, arguing that a coordination body 'is a service provider, not a regulator. Its authority comes from the collective consensus within its membership; there is no hierarchical determination of

authority.’ Such arguments, coming from scholars with long and varied practical NGO experience, is interesting, as it points towards a difference between the coordination arrangements within the NGO sector and those established by UN agencies or led by national governments.<sup>25</sup>

Facilitated coordination, then, refers to a voluntary act where those coordinated do it out of a common understanding of the situation, or in agreement about a need to coordinate aid delivery or find a unified approach for a specific situation. Such coordination arrangements can thus, arguably, be organised around a set of norms or standards worked out by the organisations themselves and applied to the extent each organisation is willing and able to enforce it internally and in their coordination bodies. An example of a norm for humanitarian intervention is the IFRC- and NGO-developed ‘Code of Conduct’ (IFRC 1994), and for a practical guideline and standards provided for project implementation, the Sphere project (2000) could be mentioned. These might then provide the NGO community with a common frame and, implicitly, a tool for coordination. Primarily established at the international level, such codes and standards could be applied all the way down to the field level, and thus ease the need for detailed standards and norms for each new relief or emergency operation.

It should, however, be noted that such ways of ensuring a common approach depend fully on each organisation’s willingness to comply and to ensure that their field staff is both informed of what the NGO has signed up to and encouraged to abide by such common rules.

A variation of a forced coordination arrangement is where one organisation is appointed as lead agency, authorised to direct all those involved in the humanitarian operation. In Kosovo this arrangement was formalised as humanitarian agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding, accepting the lead agency system, which should help to ‘clarify the respective mandates and responsibilities of each organization and establish a framework for operational cooperation between these’ (Suhrke 2000: 73). Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 17) are in principle positive towards a lead agency role in complex emergencies, particularly when there is a need for rapid disbursement of goods and a large number of NGOs competing for attention (and funds). They also, however, underline the fact that the success of such arrangements has depended on the lead agency having a high degree of legitimacy and coordinators who ‘demonstrated a mentality of inclusion and service orientation, rather than command and imperialism.’

Evidently, the level of authority applied will have implications for the level of resources needed for operating the coordination arrangement. A higher degree of regulation will require a larger administration and more funding for running the coordination arrangement. Moreover, a higher degree of authority invested in the coordinating body or agency will limit the autonomy of each organisation within the coordination arrangement. NGOs, as mentioned above, might refrain from inclusion in such coordination arrangements for fear of losing their organisational autonomy,

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<sup>25</sup> Bennett directed the Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) in the early 1990s, and has conducted extensive research on a number of NGO coordination mechanisms for his books on the subject. Van Brabant worked with NGOs in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, and was involved in NGO coordination in both of these countries.

but donors might also be less willing to fund coordination arrangements if they are not fully convinced that their investment will give an equal dividend in improving assistance provision. It also appears that agencies' resistance to being coordinated and donors' resistance to funding what they then often regard as extra layers of bureaucracy, may be even more evident in CPEs than in more development-oriented cases, since more of the funding in CPEs is for short-term projects and establishing a coordination mechanism might be regarded as an investment that is only appropriate in a longer-term engagement. Nevertheless, UN agencies and donors, because they wish to be able to extend a larger degree of control over the entire relief operation, would be most likely, even in CPEs, to favour the establishment of a more authoritative coordination arrangement.

If, however, the NGO community accepts being guided by common norms and standards, as the large number of organisations that have signed up to the Code of Conduct and the Sphere project indicates, one might envisage that this could lay the ground for the establishment of other common tools beneficial for aid coordination. Among these could be a common analysis of the complex emergency situation and the application of common, or at least comparable, needs assessment methods. If this were achievable, information exchange and comparison and prioritisation of needs among intended beneficiary groups, and geographical areas within a CPE, could arguably be more easily facilitated.

So when UN agencies and NGOs are set to operate together there will be a meeting of two totally different coordination traditions in which the NGOs frequently, as the Afghan case clearly demonstrates, are seen to resist being forcibly coordinated by the UN, something which many UN officials find difficult to understand as they perceive the UN as having a lead role.

There are, however, specialised coordination arrangements, including both UN agencies and NGOs, where a more forced model is the standard and which then needs to be examined to see why NGOs in certain cases do accept forced coordination. The most prominent example of such arrangements is the coordination of Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA), where NGOs, in general, do not oppose being coordinated by a UN-led agency and where there is an agreement on the advantages of such a coordination structure. The reasons for doing so seem, based on findings in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina, to depend on a few characteristics rather special for this type of humanitarian work (for details see appendix 1). Firstly, all NGOs are engaged in the same field of work; secondly, most of the staff involved will have a military background; thirdly, all HMA activities are very strictly regulated due to the security hazard mine clearance implies, which limits the number of agencies involved; fourthly, the coordination arrangement is not directly involved in project work, but only involved in tasking and security control; fifthly, HMA is seen as a very special task and not usually coordinated with other humanitarian activities.

#### **3.2.4. Defining NGO Coordination in CPEs**

The review of coordination theory presented above provides two distinct constructs, one emphasising the existence of and need for a coordination authority rooted in a

hierarchical structure, while the other argues for a horizontal structure without one authoritarian coordinator, where decisions are based on information sharing and consensus. Interestingly enough, proponents of the latter theory are found among researchers on Western governmental systems and the international business community; while the first theory is supported by researchers in the development field, who argue for the need for Southern governments to take charge of their own development, possibly in collaboration with the UN agencies and other intergovernmental bodies such as the World Bank. This observation can partially be explained by the findings of Hvinden, who established in his research that coordination is only meaningful between entities that are presupposed to act in a coordinated manner, whereas different groups of stakeholders in the humanitarian process hold differing views.

However, what seems to be generally agreed is that a sustained coordination of humanitarian efforts does require a formalised coordination body or structure through which the coordination efforts can be managed, rather than merely ad hoc attempts to cooperate or collaborate with other humanitarian actors. That degree of organisational formality between large numbers of NGOs, might be suggested to be a determining difference between coordination and the looser organisational forms commonly associated with cooperation and collaboration.

Furthermore, when turning to the establishment of a working definition of NGO coordination in complex political emergencies we need to disengage from the notion that there is one power centre, i.e. the national state, which will be the coordinator, having ultimate authority to direct other humanitarian actors and to establish coordination structures. A characteristic of a CPE is the lack of such a functional or recognised national authority. Rather, one needs to work on the assumption that NGO coordination is to be undertaken in parallel or in competition with coordination arrangements organised by other humanitarian actors or national groups competing for power, and even civil society organisations or forums established by the intended beneficiaries. The NGOs, like the other actors, are squarely placed within the complex and often rapidly shifting political and humanitarian reality that marks a CPE.

Thus a suggested definition of NGO coordination in CPEs would be ‘Coordination is a process and a tool, whereby non-governmental organisations through structured interaction with other humanitarian, political and civilian entities attempt to harmonize their efforts to make provision of humanitarian assistance more effective, efficient and in accordance with the needs of their intended beneficiaries’.

### 3.3. History and Structure of an International Coordination System

There is no central overview of how and when NGO coordination bodies have been established in various countries, or at an international level. Probably many coordination arrangements have faded away as emergencies came to an end, relief workers moved on and national governments were able to resume responsibility for the situation in their country. In any case, the first recording of a major NGO coordination arrangement is from Ethiopia, where the Christian Relief and

Development Association was established back in 1973 (Bennett 2000: 172), whereas the Joint Church Action was more of a joint logistic arrangement established to fly relief supplies into Biafra during the war of 1967-1970. Oxfam led the NGO Consortium for Cambodia that was established in 1979 and then the more permanent and influential Emergency Relief Desk, 1981–1991, which provided assistance to Eritrea and Tigray during the Ethiopian civil war (Van Brabant 1999: 6-7).

The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s witnessed a number of relief operations, notably those following the Gulf crisis in 1990, which challenged the traditional role of providing humanitarian assistance. Relief operations were more frequently undertaken in parallel with military operations or even with international military entities providing humanitarian assistance, as attempted in Somalia; or protecting aid delivery operations of humanitarian agencies, as was done in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In response, the United Nations General Assembly (1991) passed Resolution 46/182 in December 1991 on 'Strengthening of the Coordination of the Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations.' This and later annual updates not only influenced the way the United Nations attempted to coordinate their efforts, but set the direction for coordination between UN agencies and NGOs as well. While both NGO and UN coordination arrangements predate the 1991 resolution it has now become central to establishing a more unifying coordination structure for complex political emergencies and has introduced an international superstructure for coordination into which NGOs and NGO coordination bodies have gradually merged or been drafted.

### **3.3.1. Coordination by Nation States or Donors**

Before detailing these UN coordination arrangements, a brief introduction to a coordination structure established and run by a nation state is necessary. Not only is this the reality in most developed countries, where the government and its administrative structures are expected to take a lead role in coordinating humanitarian assistance provision during emergencies, ensuring that such efforts and international involvement is in accordance with national interests and plans. It is also the structure that any country emerging from a complex political emergency is expected to establish, enabling them to lead their own rehabilitation and development processes. The practice of a national government organising the coordination of humanitarian assistance within its own country is rooted in the national sovereignty principles on which international relations are traditionally based.

An argument for government coordination of humanitarian assistance is according Robinson (2000: 143) its 'potential for building universality of coverage and equity of access which neither the market nor voluntary action could offer.' Here, UN agencies, IGOs and NGOs would be invited to participate, and would be expected to implement their projects in accordance with agreed priorities and under governmental supervision.

However, as the national sovereignty principle has been challenged over recent years we have witnessed international interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the international community established an internationally run administration, the Office of the High Representative (OHR 2002) in East Timor, where a temporary

governance system was erected until national elections could take place; and in Kosovo, which became a UN protectorate. In all of these places there have been incorporated the provision of coordination structures for humanitarian assistance (for details on the governance situation in these countries see Suhrke, Ofstad et al. (2002: 5-6). But even in countries where there is a government, albeit unrecognised by the international community, as in Afghanistan, the UN has provided an independent structure for the coordination of humanitarian assistance and largely bypassed national structures, except for collaboration on specific projects (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 49).

It can consequently be seen as legitimate for the international community to establish coordination arrangements that exclude the national government when providing protection or humanitarian emergency assistance where the state is deemed to be 'unable or unwilling' to meet the needs of the population. There is, moreover, another contributing factor to the humanitarian agencies' wish to establish separate coordination bodies, which is identified by a recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) evaluation (2000: 13): '[T]he reality in most war-torn societies is that the authorities often lack the financial, programme and administrative resources to initiate such activities properly.'

Nations that are not experiencing crises or emergencies, most notably countries in the developed part of the world, also have a range of roles to play in aid coordination. Not only are they donors of national or international humanitarian assistance programmes, they might also be board members of UN agencies and IGOs as well as members of international donor organisations. Here national interests are likely to carry more weight than international policy directions, and alliances of what are frequently referred to as 'likeminded' countries are often formed to ensure influence for their ideas, policies or ideals, which in itself can be regarded as a coordination structure.<sup>26</sup> The outcome is, therefore, that nation states unaffected by emergencies and war will both provide humanitarian assistance to those in need, and, through the UN, provide the international community with a mandate to intervene and thus set aside the national sovereignty rule.

Two illustrative examples of donor coordination could be mentioned here. One is on the operational side, where the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission (ECHO 2000) has over recent years become the largest humanitarian assistance donor. Here members of the European Union have gained influence over the prioritisation and coordination of assistance worldwide, including the funding of the repatriation and resettlement of forced migrants. An example from Afghanistan is the coordination arrangement established among agencies receiving EU funding for refugee resettlement in Nangarhar Province and their attempts to establish 'umbrella projects' administered by an NGO from a EU country.<sup>27</sup>

The second is the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is probably the most influential international donor coordination mechanism, as well as influential in discussing policy matters and setting standards

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<sup>26</sup> The Nordic countries, and often Canada, have been instrumental in a range of humanitarian issues. The treaty to ban the use of landmines and the work on human security could be mentioned.

<sup>27</sup> Information obtained from the representative of the European Union, Peshawar, Pakistan in May 1999.



and developing of a range of guidelines for their member states. Among the guidelines formulated by their Development Advisory Committee (DAC) is one on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation (OECD 1997), which, in addition to favouring voluntary aid coordination, is explicit on the issue of coordination within the international community as well as within nations, explaining that:

*There is a broad agreement on the purposes of aid coordination: resources should be delivered as efficiently and effectively as local conditions allow; the contribution of many donors involved should be complementary and allocated in line with indigenous priorities and policies. Furthermore, external assistance must be managed so as to ease the burden on partner countries and not add to their own coordination problems.*

### **3.3.2. Establishment of a UN Humanitarian Coordination Structure**

The United Nations has, over the last ten years, taken on an active role in establishing an international coordination structure for the provision of humanitarian assistance. This started in 1991 when the UN General Assembly endorsed a resolution termed ‘Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations’ (1991). While the resolution emphasised the sovereignty of nation states, and their primary role in ‘initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory’, it further recognised that ‘many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries’, and thus ‘[T]he United Nations has a central and unique role to play in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community to support the affected countries.’

To establish a system for the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance the resolution recommended the establishment of a Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and the appointment of a single UN Emergency Relief Coordinator within the UN system, to work closely with ‘organisations and entities of the United Nations system, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Organisation for Migration and relevant non-governmental organizations.’

At the international level, an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was to be established, which should ‘meet as soon as possible in response to emergencies’, tasked to facilitate and coordinate the overall UN response. At the time of its establishment, members of the IASC were all operational UN organisations; while a standing invitation for participation was submitted to the ICRC, IFRC and IOM, with the potential to invite relevant NGOs on an ad hoc basis. Fundraising for the UN’s humanitarian emergency operations was to take place at the international level through a consolidated appeal process (CAP), prepared by concerned UN organisations engaged in each specific relief operation and in consultation with the affected state.

At the country level a UN Resident Coordinator would assume responsibility for coordinating humanitarian assistance, promoting the use of ‘all locally and regionally available relief capacities’ to ‘assist in a speedy transition from relief to

development'. The Resident Coordinator would chair an emergency operation group of field representatives and experts from the UN system. The resolution reiterated in the concluding chapter the importance of emergency relief being provided 'in a way that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development', hence the need to involve UN development assistance organisations at an early stage.

One might say that the UN here erected a superstructure for aid coordination, expecting other humanitarian actors and donors to accept UN leadership in emergency situations. That did not necessarily happen, and the failure of the UN system, partly based on internal rivalry, duplication of roles and a tendency to resist the concentration within the UN system of key functions (Taylor 2000: 195), can be illustrative of the organisational difficulties of setting up new coordination structures aimed at establishing authority within the wider humanitarian sphere.

While the position of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) was maintained in the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action of 17 July 1997, as part of the wider UN reform, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) replaced the DHA from January 1998 (Taylor 2000: 195).

The later attempts to establish a national coordination frame for UN agencies' operations in complex political emergencies through a Strategic Framework Approach (SCF) (UNCO 1998), which was tested in Afghanistan, did not yield the expected administrative and strategic results, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Nor did the CAP process live up to its expectations for fundraising for such emergencies. If we take Afghanistan as an example, the CAP process and related coordination structures administrated by OCHA, according to a recent CMI report (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 55), 'have done little to strengthen joint formulation of priorities or coordination of programme development'.<sup>28</sup> Referring to an ODI evaluation of Humanitarian Coordination by Reindorp and Wiles (2001), the report concludes that (op.cit. 54) 'the CAP process shows the same shortcomings as those observed by a recent evaluation of the common appeals elsewhere. Not only is the CAP under-funded, and not very highly prioritised by either UN agencies or the NGOs, but it was neither seen to have improved the overall coordination efforts among NGOs and other humanitarian actors'.

### 3.3.3. UN Relationship with NGOs

In parallel with the growing dissatisfaction with the UN coordination system, by the mid-1990s there was a debate within the United Nations on their relationship with the NGOs, as these gradually took over many of the previous roles of the UN agencies; and, as Cohen and Deng (1998: 188) further noted, NGOs had become the main implementing partner of UN agencies in emergency situations. However, the UN process aimed at clarifying their relationship with the NGO sector had already started in 1993, while in 1996 the UN Economic and Social Council debated the relationship; this was followed in 1998 by a report from the Secretary General to the UN General Assembly on 'Arrangements and Practises for the Interaction of Non-

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<sup>28</sup> OCHA Afghanistan is referred to as UNOCHA to differentiate it from the main body, whereas in the Afghan structure, until early 2002, UNOCHA was part of the UN Coordinator's Office (UNCO).

governmental Organizations in all Activities of the United Nations system' (A/53/170) (1998). Here it was argued that NGOs are 'the clearest manifestation of what is referred to as "civil society", that is, the sphere in which social movements organize themselves around objectives, constituencies and thematic interests.' The Secretary General concluded that '[T]he United Nations is committed to seeking the participation and contribution of NGOs in its work. New approaches, attitudes, methods and responses are required throughout the United Nations system if we are to meet these challenges effectively.'

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), as the main forum for consultation and decision-making between humanitarian agencies, was expanded to include three NGO international consortia (detailed later in this chapter).<sup>29</sup> An IASC Steering Committee was established to enhance a more rapid response capacity, and the CAP was altered to include appeals for rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as funding requirements for human rights field operations, which then included NGO projects. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the Strategic Framework Approach was expanded in 1998 to include both NGOs and donors in a UN-facilitated coordination process termed Principled Common Programming (OCHA 1998), a development that both coincided with the OECD call for donor involvement in coordination efforts, and was also a recognition within the UN system of a need to include NGOs to a larger extent in the coordination process. The UN could no longer simply overlook their donors and, in many cases, the agencies that implemented their projects and programmes in the field, although, as will be discussed in the Afghan case, these changes were not that easily achieved, since, while a policy might be devised at the international level, the actual changes had to take place in the field.

### 3.3.4. Operational or Strategic Coordination

The IASC therefore emerged as an important intra-agency and international coordinating body, defining and setting policy issues on behalf of the wider humanitarian community. In its deliberations on the coordination of humanitarian assistance, the committee delineated coordination as being either 'operational' or 'strategic' and defined the latter as including the following functions (Lautze, Jones et al. 1998: 7-8):

- Setting the overall direction and goals of the UN humanitarian programme.
- Allocating tasks and responsibilities within that programme and ensuring they are reflected in the strategic plan.
- Advocacy for humanitarian principles.
- Negotiating access to affected populations.

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<sup>29</sup> The following organisations were then members of IASC: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); World Food Programme (WFP); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); World Health Organisation (WHO); United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR); International Organisation for Migration (IOM); International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); International Federation of the Red Crescent and Red Cross (IFRC); the Secretary-General's Representative on Internally Displaced Persons; the World Bank (WB); and three international NGO consortia.

- Ensuring correspondence between resource mobilisation and established priorities.
- Monitoring and evaluating the overall implications of the programme.
- Liaising with military and political actors of the international community, including those of the UN.

However, Bennett (2000: 185-186) is critical to this divide and argues that the above listed tasks should rather be divided into representational and policy functions, whereas for operational coordination he identifies an administrative and a substantive component, where the first is provision of common services while the latter is operational coordination in relation to specific sectors, geographical areas or beneficiary groups.

Uvin (1999), synthesising findings from a range of conflict areas, expands on the definitions provided by the IASC and provides a distinction between three levels of coordination: 1) political; 2) strategic; and 3) operational. He also points towards a fourth element, communication and information-sharing, which he sees as a requirement for the three other levels to function. He argues that while both information-sharing and operational coordination seem to function rather well, it is at the strategic and political level that coordination breaks down and that 'only information-sharing is well developed' (1999: 18).

He is further of the view that existing strategic level coordination mechanisms are weak, a viewpoint shared by Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 6), who furthermore, based on a more recent evaluation, conclude that in practice on the ground 'distinctions between operational and strategic coordination appear to serve little purpose (except for those who use them in interagency arguments about who is responsible for what).'

### **3.3.5. Reflection on Donor Country and UN Coordination**

There is clearly a major difference in views held by donor country organisations like the OECD and the UN on the need for a formal coordination arrangement. The UN, on the one hand, has attempted to ensure not only coordination between UN agencies, but also inclusion of inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) and NGOs and donors in their more forced coordination arrangements, while the OECD emphasises the need for voluntary coordination and multiple approaches.

The duality of the OECD viewpoint is, however, interesting to note: on the one hand they acknowledge the right of national governments, based on their sovereignty, to direct and coordinate the international aid effort within their own boundaries; but, on the other, and using the same sovereignty principles, they argue for the right of donor countries not to be led or directed but rather to be voluntarily encouraged through a set of common principles to engage in funding humanitarian operations. At the heart of this argument seems to lie the acknowledgement that each single donor, if not willing to accept the conditions or recommendations of nation states or coordinating bodies, can simply withdraw their funding. The argument would appear to be equally applicable in complex political emergencies as in development situations, though in the first case there might be an absence of a functional or accepted government and

thus the donors would have to relate to a UN or NGO coordination arrangement or a UN coordinator. Seemingly, what the OECD wished to achieve by adopting such guidelines was to ensure maximum influence, through a more informal donor coordination arrangement within a strategic framework.

This notion is, however, challenged by Uvin (1999), who in his synthesis report suggests six alternatives to traditional coordination that donors may consider for incorporation into the OECD *Guidelines* and which would provide a different frame for donor engagement in complex political emergencies. He argues for 1) larger transparency; 2) a higher degree of local ownership; 3) decentralisation of decision-making; 4) leadership by donors, preferably multilateral ones, willing to bear the cost and management such an arrangement entails; 5) innovation in diversity; and 6) joint evaluations of ongoing projects and programmes.

By and large, donors have in fact preferred a ‘free for all approach’, where NGOs have often been the preferred partners of international donors, rather than the UN agencies that have formally elevated themselves to the coordination task. One reason for donor countries’ reluctance to support UN initiatives fully is suggested by Lautze, Jones et al. (1998: 105), who argue ‘that UN agencies are not designed to work in close collaboration with one another’; whereas Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 1) explain that ‘[T]he structure of the UN “system” of funds, agencies and programmes based on a political logic of UN member states’ interests is a fundamental obstacle to coordination. UN agencies mimic member states by jealously guarding their “sovereignty”’. Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 13) have documented that in the field NGOs, IGOs, and also donors, have to a varying degree resisted attempts at being directed by more hierarchical and UN-supervised coordination structures. One reason for this, given by an NGO source, is ‘that they find UN structures at least opaque, if not baffling. This lack of clarity across the UN has been an enduring obstacle to effective coordination.’ Another common explanation heard in the field is competition for funding between UN agencies and NGOs, and different organisational cultures (personal communication, Afghanistan 2000). Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 2), when looking at institutional obstacles to coordination, point out that coordination in the UN system is neither required nor rewarded, that Coordinators are frequently perceived to have vested institutional interests rather than serving the entire system, and ‘[T]he UN preoccupation with itself, and subsequent exclusion or neglect of international and local NGOs from the UN’s coordination efforts is a third institutional obstacle to coordination.’

The internal competition between UN agencies and between them and IGOs and NGOs for funds has left these humanitarian actors vulnerable to their donors’ particular interests, which, according to Minear (2002) are mainly ‘driven not by the needs of vulnerable civilian populations but by donor interests, heavily political in nature, and reinforced by the institutional dynamics of humanitarian organizations themselves.’

However, as long as the UN agencies continue to be marred by internal competition and turf battles, and coordination between the different UN agencies is claimed as the preferred remedy for improving the functionality of the UN system, it is as well to include here a cautionary observation made by the late Fred Cuny, who had long experience of working closely with UN agencies in a number of humanitarian

operations. In an article discussing the establishment of the DHA (Weiss and Minear 1993), he presented a serious concern that coordination should not come instead of or be a substitute for necessary reforms of the entire UN system:

*The establishment of an interagency coordinating mechanism is certainly laudable. However, without major structural reforms within each UN organization, true coordination will remain elusive. The emphasis on coordination, rather than structural reform, means that in every operation the United Nations will throw together ad hoc structures to deal with problems. Opportunities for training teams that could work together and improve with experience will be lost. In the recent reforms, the donors failed to grasp the essence of the problem. They pushed for better coordination when what they really need is more effective delivery of services. The best coordination in the world will not overcome structural deficiencies.*

In any case, whatever its causes, the lack of an efficient and acceptable UN or donor coordination system has resulted in a larger role being required of the NGOs in coordination in complex political emergencies. Thus, NGO-established coordination structures need to be discussed in more detail, to see if these have had any greater success in achieving a more effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance.

### 3.4. NGO Coordination Arrangements

According to Van Brabant (1999: 6) there is 'no well analysed nor widely disseminated experience of NGO coordination', despite the range of practical experience in many parts of the world. His worry is that those engaging in coordination activities do not 'have a clear framework to understand and pursue coordination with' (1999: 13). The person who has undertaken most research and analysis of NGO coordination is Jon Bennett. He has identified a range of terms used to describe NGO coordination arrangements such as consortia, councils, federations, umbrella agencies, networks, unions, and coordination bodies (1995: 169). NGO coordination, when undertaken in a formalised manner, would, according to Bennett, require:

- Independence from government, though it may include government participation.
- The setting up of a secretariat, answerable to an elected executive committee, that takes responsibility for administering the day-to-day activities of a membership organisation.
- A national perspective, i.e., it will usually cover more than just one sector and will take on some kind of representational role.

Derived from these requirements, Bennett provides a typology of eight different groups of NGO coordination arrangements that he has identified:

1. Umbrella organisations of NGOs.
2. Umbrella organisations of NGOs for a single sector/issue.

3. Groups of grassroots organisations.
4. Consultative councils (government/NGO).
5. Councils of social welfare or social services.
6. International NGO consortia.
7. Religious affiliation consortia.
8. Sub-regional networks of NGOs (including groups listed from 1 to 5).

He notes, moreover, that many of these umbrella groups might not accept a coordination role although ‘invariably they facilitate coordination through information exchange’ or ‘can move from one category to the other’ (Bennett 1995: 170). As this classification of coordination arrangements coincides with the author's initial findings, the categories will be used to group the identified international and national coordination arrangements reviewed below.

However, at the outset of a discussion on NGO coordination one needs to keep in mind that coordination is not a straightforward process where all NGOs happily volunteer to join a coordination arrangement or are willing to allocate human or financial resources to ensure that the best qualified persons have the means to set up a well-functioning organisational structure. Van Brabant (1999: 19) observes that the more task- and target-oriented the coordination function becomes, ‘the more substantive, but probably also the more controversial it will be.’ He rightly points out, with reference to Donini (1996: 45), that a key factor where some successful coordination occurs, is ‘personal chemistry’ and ‘leadership’, while listing what he defines as common objections to coordination. These include a frequently used argument of ‘different mandates’, a position which in his view is based on organisational self-interest ‘...with total disregard of the interests of the intended beneficiaries’ and which Van Brabant firmly rejects, arguing that ‘[F]undamentally humanitarian agencies do not have different mandates’ (1999: 15).

The second objection he critiques is an expressed fear of coordination causing delay in implementation in acute emergencies. His point of view is that this concern would only be valid in a minority of circumstances and thus does not constitute an argument against coordination per se. A related concern is resistance to establishing new ‘layers of bureaucracy’. In this case, he agrees that ineffective coordination is a waste of time and resources, but attributes such cases to the fact that coordination efforts are frequently under-funded, because coordination is actually both time- and staff-intensive. He finally questions the notion that coordination implies accountability, not because it is not relevant, but rather because accountability needs to work in two directions. That is, as well as upward accountability to the donors, which Van Brabant has identified as the main concern among agencies, he argues that ‘there has to be accountability in terms of the effectiveness of the work, and its impact’ (1999: 16).

However, before starting a more detailed review of how coordination efforts are organised at the field level, a presentation of the international NGO coordination arrangements is necessary, in order to identify any hierarchy through which the interests and concerns of forced migrants might be represented and presented at the international level.

### 3.4.1. International NGO Coordination Arrangements

While the UN's coordination system is coordinated from the top to the bottom, with rather clearly defined communication lines and responsibilities for the 'coordinators', the NGO system is far less structured, lacking one unifying NGO coordination structure. There are, however, ranges of different types of interagency collaboration and coordination arrangement, notably among European- and US-based agencies.

#### *International Coordination Bodies*

The only intra-NGO meeting-point is the one they share with the UN and the IGOs, namely, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), whose meetings are attended by three international coordinating bodies. These are the USA-based InterAction (159 members) (1999), and the two Geneva-based ones, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (2002) (79 members, including NGO coordinating bodies), and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), which has the nine largest alliances of intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations as members.

It is important to note here that these coordination arrangements cannot be seen as representative of all types of NGO or NGO coordination arrangement. With the exception of International Consortium of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), which has 34 non-European member agencies (ICVA 2002), it could be argued that these coordination arrangements mainly represent the interests of the US- and European-based NGOs, which between them, according to Gordenker and Weiss (1996:218), control 80 % of the financial value of assistance provided in emergencies.

#### *International Coordination Arrangements*

There are, however, other international coordination arrangements that have considerable influence within the international humanitarian system, although not formally included in UN or NGO coordination arrangements. Of particular note are larger umbrella organisations of NGOs, either formed within groups of agencies of the same 'family', or for a particular task. One type of such coordination arrangements is where separate national entities of the same international organisations have formed an overall coordination structure, which is then responsible for promoting a certain degree of common strategy and aims, while at the same time being able to draw on national funding resources with an international 'brand name'.

Among the most influential of such multinational NGO families is CARE International, with eleven national entities (all from developing countries), which jointly aim to 'create a world where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security' (CARE International 2002). The more advocacy-oriented OXFAM International is another example, arguing for 'global responses to global problems' (Oxfam 2002). The thirty national Save the Children organisations term their arrangement an Alliance (Save the Children UK 2002). Specialising in assistance for children, they describe themselves as the world's leading independent



children's rights organisation, and could be defined as an umbrella organisation for a single sector/issue.

Amnesty International could also be listed within this single issue group; they define their structure as a 'worldwide campaign movement' (Amnesty International 2002), with nationally organised sections in 56 countries, which 'works to promote all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards (Amnesty International 2002). The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) (2002) is another, defining themselves as a 'network'. ICBL have in their membership both national campaigns (such as those in Afghanistan and Cambodia), and international (Lutheran World Federation) and national (Norwegian People's Aid) NGOs.

Another international NGO coordination arrangement that could be described both as an umbrella organisation of NGOs for a single sector/issue and a religious affiliation consortia is the Action of Churches Together (ACT) (2002), a specialised emergency relief collaboration between 180 Catholic and Lutheran humanitarian organisations, defining themselves as 'a global alliance of churches and aid agencies.' ACT issues joint funding proposals on behalf of their members, and to a large extent utilises the 277 branches of their member organisations, of which a majority are national NGOs or churches, or their partner organisations, when planning and implementing their programmes (ACT 2002). This arrangement, according to ACT, includes 'local roots within the population affected by an emergency and is thus able to provide locally based knowledge, analysis and understanding of an emergency situation.'

The next category of NGO group is close to being defined as an umbrella organisation of NGOs for a single sector/issue, but in fact they could be seen to represent primarily the interests of certain groups of NGOs towards a common donor, or for a specific country with the aim of advocating and securing funding for the activities of their member agencies. Only European coordination structures are identified here, possibly due to the fact that the European Union and ECHO have become the single largest donor over recent years, and include agencies like Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation and Emergency (VOICE) (2002), the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs to the EU (CLONG) (2002) and the European Association of Non-governmental Organisations for Food Aid and Emergency Aid (EuronAid) (2002) (with 34 members). Thus one could suggest that a separate category of consortia for donor lobbying could be added to the list Bennett presented.

Another variation of international coordination arrangements are those established for a specific country, of which the British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) can stand as an example. BAAG was established in 1987 'to provide a forum for British NGOs to reflect on the broader issues relating to their programmes assisting refugees and people in Afghanistan' (Atmar, Barakat et.al. 1998). BAAG emphasises dissemination of information, issuing monthly reviews of the situation in Afghanistan and serving as a meeting forum and a resource base for British-based NGOs in Afghanistan (personal communication, 1999).

However, and despite the formation of NGO families, networks and alliances, it is important to note that even in a single CPE, several national entities of the same

alliance, such as Care International, or coordination bodies, such as ACT, might actually be represented, because their family ties do not prohibit members of the groups from establishing themselves to provide assistance for the same beneficiaries.<sup>30</sup> In this case the agencies might keep themselves totally independent of each other, although one does often find a degree of specialisation among the different national branches, which can reduce the internal competition.<sup>31</sup> Some of the alliances, like Save the Children, also have a regional coordination mechanism, such as for Asia, where more common strategies can be devised.

### *ICRC and IFRC*

In a category of their own are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2002) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (2002). Both organisations have observer status at the IASC and take part in the SCHR, while the IFRC is also a member of ICVA. However, the ICRC defines itself as ‘an impartial, neutral and independent organization’ (ICRC 2002) and in the light of a mandate rooted in the Geneva Convention, the ICRC declines to be led or instructed by coordination arrangements facilitated by NGOs or UN organisations. It describes its position thus: ‘[T]he ICRC cooperates with many international organizations but insists on its own complete independence’ (ICRC 2002).

The IFRC, whose members are nationally governed societies, is often regarded as a semi-governmental rather than a non-governmental entity, given their close proximity to the governments or ruling groups in some countries, which leads to confusion and uncertainty in some countries as to whether they are to be regarded as a governmental or non-governmental entity. Taking Afghanistan as an example, the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is not a member of any of the NGO coordination arrangements (Strand, Lander et al. 1999: appendix VIII), and successive Afghan governing structures have appointed new directors of the ARCS when assuming power.<sup>32</sup> Although fully active in Afghanistan, the ARCS is also not listed by the IFRC as one of their country members (IFRC 2002). This is in contrast to the Norwegian and British Red Cross organisations, which are both listed as IFRC member NGOs, defined as NGOs and independent of their governments in their respective countries (Norges Røde Kors 2002).

### *Conclusion*

From the above review of international NGO coordination arrangements it could be suggested that they primarily represent NGO interests towards their donors or the UN system. They therefore to a much lesser degree represent all types of

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<sup>30</sup> In Afghanistan Save the Children (US), Save the Children (UK) and Radda Barna (Save the Children, Sweden) have been operational for a large number of years.

<sup>31</sup> The Director of the Norwegian Save the Children in Sri Lanka explained in 2001 how the different national entities specialised in different fields to complement each other’s activities.

<sup>32</sup> The Rabbani Government appointed Dr Reza Haider, closely affiliated with the Shura-e-Nezar, as the AFRCS Director, and he was replaced by the brother of the influential secretary of the Taliban leader Mullah Omar as *Taliban* assumed power in Kabul (personal communication, Kabul, 2001).

international NGO, and essentially do not represent grassroots organisations based in developing countries or CPEs.

There are, however, alliances of NGOs formed to safeguard and advocate the interests of the beneficiaries, either more general interests, as in the case of Oxfam, or more specific beneficiary interests, as is the case for the Save the Children Alliance. These bodies are to a large extent mandated to advocate on behalf of those they intend to assist, including the forced migrants, although there is no specific international coordination arrangement for NGOs engaged in assisting forced migrants. This last point is quite an interesting finding, not least because there are Refugee Councils in Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom and the Norwegian Refugee Council even established the Global IDP Survey. It appears that these agencies have found it more beneficial to enter into collaboration with a wider range of NGOs, as the NRC's active role in ICVA indicates, or to provide experienced staff for UN agencies, another activity of the NRC (2000), rather than to forge a narrow specialisation in the field of forced migration through a Refugee Council coordination body.<sup>33</sup>

However, apart from their organisational arrangements, a further line of inquiry to be pursued is the ability of members of these coordination arrangements to act as spokespersons for forced migrants. Evidently the campaigns undertaken by NGOs, NGO alliances and families and the ICRC and IFRC to set norms and standards at the international level, as well as campaigns to end the use of landmines and secure the rights of the internally displaced, are of immense value for all groups of forced migrants. The international NGO community has here demonstrated that it is both willing and able to stand up and protect the rights of marginalised groups by using their influence with their own constituency, their national governments, the UN and other international institutions, in order to secure the rights of forced migrants.

### **3.4.2. Nationally-based NGO Coordination**

While NGOs involved in the above-mentioned international NGO coordinating arrangements manage the bulk of funding provided for the NGO sector, a cursory review of some CPEs reveals that the international forums are outnumbered by coordination arrangements established at a national or regional/district level within a specific country and with a much more diverse NGO representation. If we turn to Afghanistan, for example, there was in 1999 a total of five NGO coordinating bodies, of which three had countrywide representation, while two were regionally-based entities (Strand, Lander et al. 1999), all of which had very limited cooperation between themselves or with governmental structures. The dividing lines between those with national coverage was by type of NGO: one coordinating body was only for Afghan NGOs, one for Islamic NGOs, and the third accepted all types of NGO; but their members were predominantly Western NGOs. However, here as at the international level, the different NGO coordination bodies met in the UN-established coordination forum at national and regional levels (details of these arrangements are provided in Chapter 6).

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<sup>33</sup> The Director of NRC, Trygve Nordby, took up the post of ICVA Director in the mid-1990s in a bid to strengthen this coordination organisation (personal communication).

In the Aceh province of Indonesia in 2000, five NGO coordination bodies were found to be operating at this provincial level, primarily established by national NGOs, as very few international NGOs were present. These were more thematically divided, with one organisation for general NGO coordination, one for agencies involved in environmental protection, one for human rights issues, one for advocacy work and a fifth formed to promote economic assistance (Aitken, Barakat et al. 2001: 11). This latter group included NGOs involved in enhancing the capacities of new NGOs, and, as described by other NGOs, a range of government-contracted NGOs accused of being more semi-governmental than non-governmental (private communication, 2000).

It should here be noted that the majority of the NGOs, and not least those involved in human rights and advocacy issues, were fiercely anti-government and resisted any suggestion of collaboration with what they regarded as an oppressive regime. Some of the NGOs and the coordinating bodies did, however, have close collaboration with Jakarta-based NGOs and were seeking international funding through these. The national NGOs, for their part, were reluctant to see any increase in the establishment of international NGOs in the province, if these were to compete with national ones for funding for rehabilitation and development activities, although they did recognise the advantage of the presence of international NGOs when it came to human rights monitoring and advocacy work (Strand 2000: 9).

In Sri Lanka a different pattern was identified, as there was only one national NGO coordinating body, the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), acting as a counterpart to the Government of Sri Lanka and the donors, allowing governmental entities observer status (Barakat, Evans et al. 2001: 37-38). In contrast to Afghanistan, CHA also undertook advocacy work, for example, for the rights of prisoners, and recorded and disseminated information on human rights violations. The coordinating body had, furthermore, developed a Sri Lanka-specific toolkit for the protection of IDPs through the operationalisation of UN guiding principles, and had established working groups for the introduction of the Sphere Project. In contrast to the situation in both Afghanistan and Aceh, CHA had close collaboration with the Sri Lankan government at the national level. The influence of CHA, however, did not extend very widely outside the capital, Colombo, where the majority of international NGOs were based.

The two geographical forums, the Eastern Forum and the Northern Groups, were convened in Colombo among agencies based there. There were, however, a number of smaller coordinating bodies, termed District Consortia, established at the district level. Here local Government officer often called for meetings, in which a range of national NGOs, mostly non-CHA members, participated (personal communication, 2000), and while CHA members, if active in those particular districts, attended some of the meetings, there was no formalised collaboration between CHA and the District Consortia. There were hints among some NGO staff members of a rural/urban divide causing a degree of tension between Colombo-based and district-based agencies, and, moreover, of a degree of anti-government attitudes (and a degree of control over certain NGOs by the opposition to the Government), which could possibly explain the reluctance of these district-based NGOs to engage with CHA. However, in

general, in Sri Lanka the Government did have a more extensive influence on NGO coordination than was the case in Afghanistan and Aceh.

A brief comparison of the activities of the coordination arrangements in these three countries also provides some interesting general observations; namely that:

- There was more than one NGO coordinating body in all locations.
- There is some inherent tension between international and national NGOs, which led to the establishment of separate coordination bodies in the case of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, and reservations against the influx of international NGOs into Aceh.
- Different contexts in the history of humanitarian intervention create different coordination arrangements. In Afghanistan NGOs are divided according to nationality and faith; in Aceh in accordance with the thematic activity of the NGOs; while in Sri Lanka there is mainly a division between centre and periphery.
- In all three locations it can be argued that there is a degree of politicisation of aid, with NGOs largely siding against the government.
- In all of the locations the NGO coordinating bodies had a primary focus on information exchange among their members and showed a reluctance to engage with other coordinating bodies. Although some coordinating bodies in Sri Lanka had picked up on international campaigns, like the Sphere Project and the IDP projects, this international dimension and any linking with the activities of the international coordination structures was largely absent in Afghanistan and Aceh.<sup>34</sup>

It is also interesting to note that very few references were made in Afghanistan and Aceh to the international NGO coordination bodies, even among the staff of NGOs that were members of these organisations. This could imply that international NGOs, at their home offices, have not been particularly active in informing their field offices about their engagement in international coordinating bodies or their support for initiatives such as the 'Code of Conduct';<sup>35</sup> while at the same time, the field staff have not thought of utilising international channels and networks to promote ideas or for advocacy initiatives.

This disconnect might, however, merely be illustrative of how fragmented the NGO system is, as the above illustration indicates; and how easily information is therefore lost in the long and unclear communication channels that need to be managed by single agencies and are not catered for by an overall superstructure, as is the case with the UN system and also, to a certain extent, donors through the OECD.

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<sup>34</sup> An initiative taken by Mohammed Ehsan Zia, an Afghan researcher/NGO employee, for engaging NGOs working in Afghanistan in discussion on how the 'Code of Conduct' should be operationalised, never received the necessary support among NGOs to materialise his plan (personal communication, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Taking Norwegian Church Aid's Afghanistan Programme as an example, the Deputy Director was not informed in 1999 that the organisation had signed the 'Code of Conduct'.

### 3.5. Coordination Levels and Activities

Van Brabant (1999: 17) is rather precise when he defines the aims and rationale of what he describes as operational coordination; namely, to achieve: 1) similar standards of quality; 2) cost-effective use of resources; 3) rational allocation of tasks; and 4) working towards agreed priorities, all of which, he argues 'will contribute to impact.' But while there might be general agreement on these aims, since they are rather broadly defined, there seems to be a need for a more detailed exploration of the different types of coordination activity that actually take place in a CPE: who organises such coordination efforts, which efforts and actors are involved at the different levels, and what types of coordination activities they engage in; and a further exploration of the differences found between forced or facilitated coordination at the field level. While drawing on descriptions of coordination activities such as those presented by Bennett (1995); Van Brabant (1997; 1999); Barnes (1998); and Hanlon (2000), the author will furthermore make use of examples from the research project.

#### 3.5.1. Variation in Coordination Arrangements

There appears to be a large degree of variation in coordination arrangements, and also in the degree of formality and authority found, depending on who has taken the initiative to set up a coordination structure, and which agencies and entities are included in such efforts. Government-initiated coordination is, to some extent, the ideal norm, although in complex political emergencies, as we have established, other humanitarian actors might call for the establishment of separate coordination arrangements, which might have different organisational models and influence on NGO coordination.

A possible model is one in which the international community might have installed a transitional authority, to function temporarily on behalf of a national state, which would assume responsibility for national coordination arrangements. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GFAP), often referred to as the Dayton agreement, and the international appointment of a High Representative, might be a case in point (OHR 2002). East Timor and Kosovo are similar examples, although in both of these countries emerging from war the United Nations has provided a transitional authority, with a plan for transfer of authority to a national government.

Here, as Jones (2000: 13) underlines, 'the UN in theory coordinates not only its own activities but that of some portion of the non-governmental and other multilateral actors.' Such a role is further formalised in countries where the UN, with the consent of the donors, has assumed a lead agency role. In the Great Lakes in 1994-95 UNHCR was backed by ECHO, which channelled all their NGO funds through them; and in the refugee camps in Ngara, Tanzania in 1994 the Tanzanian government backed them and major donors used UNHCR as a funding channel (Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 16-17); they had less success, however, in Kosovo (Suhrke, Barutchisk et al. 2000). In the first two cases donors' support led to a limitation on numbers of NGOs and personnel to administrate, which in turn, according to Reindorp and Wiles, contributed to a highly effective response. They also mention the East Timor

experience, in which the UN Humanitarian Coordinator could limit access to the island in 1999, thus keeping the number of agencies at a more manageable level.

The lead agency issues are, however, controversial, as Jones (2000: 13) points out that 'the question of who within the UN coordinates overall post-conflict activity is among the most contentious of current UN debates', not least as it is expected to 'coordinate among a range of actors and coordinate across sectors'. He also notes that UN and NGO coordination is further curtailed by the fact that a number of NGOs have shied away from being coordinated by the UN, naming especially NGOs principally funded through ECHO, such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Jones 2000: 15).

Coordination arrangements called for by the donors is another option, as the OECD has pointed out. In most instances, however, such arrangements appear to be intra-donor arrangements rather than more inclusive bodies and are often termed support groups. Afghanistan might be the case in point, where a number of 'like-minded' countries formed the Afghan Support Group (ASG) in 1997, acting as both a policy discussion forum for the donors and a fund-raising body. While formally not part of the UN-led coordination structure, it emerged as a very influential element, not least as the group controlled much of the funding for both the UN agencies and the NGOs (Suhrke, Harpviken et al. 2002: 40-51). In this case, the donors did not need to force other humanitarian actors to take part in their coordination arrangement; there was, rather, a competition among these to be invited to the ASG bi-annual meeting, because it provided NGOs and UN agencies with direct access to their donors.

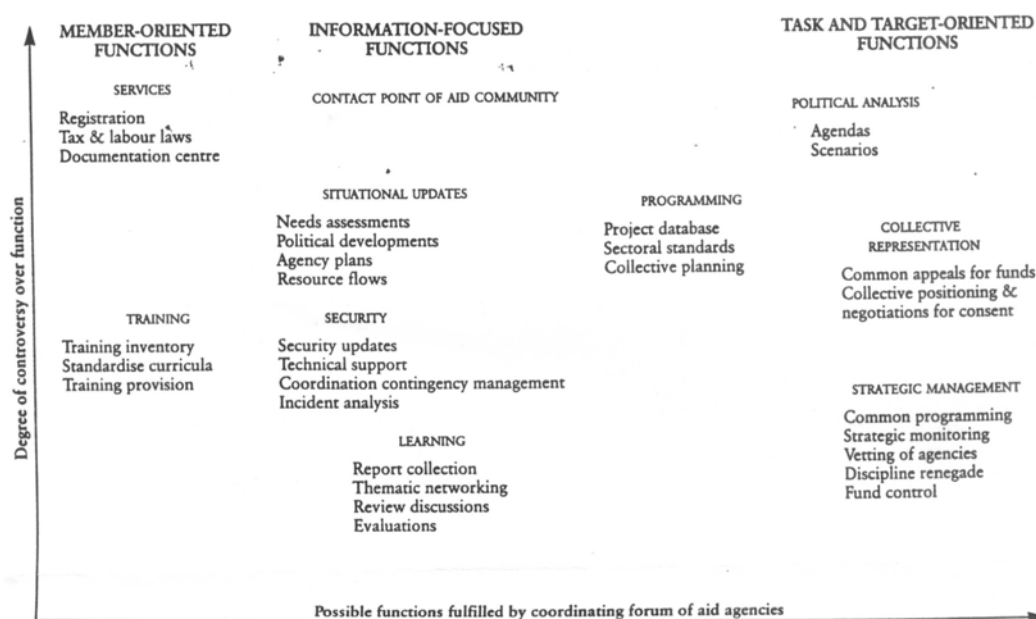
Next we examine coordination that is called upon by NGOs: generally, for a country (as in Sri Lanka); within a specific category of NGOs (as with Afghan NGOs); agencies active in a particular field (such as health); operating in one geographical area (like Western Afghanistan); or for a specific purpose (such as security). Such coordination arrangements might exist despite the presence of other coordination arrangements established by governments, UN agencies or donors, as all three cases illustrate. It is also clear, as the Sri Lanka case illustrates, that when NGOs invite other actors into their coordination arrangements the aim is to gain influence and support through information exchange and inclusion. NGOs, by their nature, do not strive for authority over other humanitarian actors or donors, though they wish to be treated on equal terms, to be recognised for the important role they believe they play and to be included in others' coordination arrangements. Drawing on the Afghan case, it appears that coordination arrangements including Western NGOs have the upper hand in being invited into other coordination arrangements, possibly due to their closer affiliation with single donor countries. For instance, the British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) has frequently been invited to Afghan Support Group meetings, while the Pakistani-based coordination group, the Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB), with more than 100 Afghan NGO members, has been excluded (personal communication, 2000).

What can be established from the literature review and the case studies is that there is no blueprint for an NGO coordination arrangement; rather, it will emerge as deemed necessary by the NGOs taking the initiative for such an establishment. Thus the structure and the arrangement will certainly vary according to the type of NGOs that are involved in establishing a coordination arrangement in a certain location, and

according to the needs these NGOs see for themselves and the NGO community at large. In particular, as Van Brabant highlights from the establishment of the CHA in Sri Lanka, much depends on the background, previous experience and perspectives of the individuals involved in the process. Given the lack of an overall superstructure or authority within the NGO sector, one can further assume that an NGO coordination arrangement will take on an organisational structure that is regarded as non-threatening to the influence and authority of single member agencies.

### 3.5.2. Coordination Activities and Formalities

Van Brabant (2001) has developed a more comprehensive overview of what activities a field level coordination encompasses and added to that a perspective on the degree of controversy surrounding each of these functions. He has categorised the activities into different functions: member-oriented functions, which include services and training activities; information-focused functions, which include being a contact point for the aid community, situational updates, security, programming and learning; task- and target-oriented functions, including political analysis, collective representation and strategic management. Details on each of these functions are provided in Box 10 below.



**Box 10 :** Possible Functions of a Coordination Forum

**Source:** Van Brabant, 2001

This matrix can also be expanded to include thematic (such as health, agriculture, advocacy) and geographical coordination activities, although, certainly, not all coordination arrangements would include all of these activities. It is this point which also points to the inherent weakness of such a matrix; that it inevitably falls short of capturing the full variation in the degree of formality and diversity of organisational arrangements made for the purposes of coordination. It therefore does not reflect the



reality that, actually, a small, field-based coordination arrangement with a limited number of activities might be more effective and efficient in coordinating NGO activities than a large, bureaucratic national coordination body.

It can further be argued that the easiest NGO coordination body to establish, as well as being the least formal and most flexible arrangement to manage, is that established at the field level by operational NGOs. Such arrangements might start as informal meetings called at short notice, but the formality of the arrangement is ensured once one of the parties to the coordination efforts records the meetings and eventual decisions made and distributes the minutes among the participating agencies.

The next degree of formality will be where NGOs have established a formalised schedule of meetings to which all agencies that operate in a specific area or who provide the same type of assistance or engage with the same groups of beneficiaries are invited. The task of convening and recording the event can either be entrusted to one agency or be done on a rotation basis. In either case, the coordination arrangement functions as collective leadership, with one person or organisation entrusted with the role of leader of the coordination efforts at any given time. The Herat based NGO's Coordination Body in Afghanistan worked along these lines before they employed a coordinator to manage their affairs on a daily basis, who then also took over the function of calling meetings and writing up and distributing minutes.

The highest degree of formality is when a separate, independent coordination body is established, which agencies are invited either to join or to apply for membership. Such bodies would then be governed by organisational by-laws and the members would elect a steering committee or a board, or both, to manage the affairs and finances of the organisation in the period between annual meetings. This could then also include the authority to accept new members, in accordance with established criteria, to employ staff to undertake the daily management of the organisation, and to represent their members' interests in different forums or with the authorities or donors.

### **3.5.3. Levels of Coordination Activities and Actors Involved**

Coordination between NGOs and between NGOs and other humanitarian actors, however, does not take place at just one level, although it is activities of national coordination entities that are most frequently reported. The coordination of humanitarian assistance, in fact, ranges from the joint planning of NGOs working in the same neighbourhood to a strategy meeting of UN and NGO directors in New York. So a first step in an analysis of coordination efforts is to specify the various levels at which coordination is taking place and identify the types of activity most frequently undertaken at each of these different levels, defined by Harpviken, Millard et al. (2001: 42) as the international level, the national level and the local level; the latter is also frequently termed the field level. Practical short-term arrangements between two or more agencies in the field are not included here, as they are regarded as purely practical collaboration rather than representing a formal and organisationally committed coordination process. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that such practical arrangements might well exist within a larger, formally

coordinated relief and rehabilitation programme, and might also lead to a formal coordination arrangement when the agencies so decide.

### *The Field Level*

Arguably, it is only at the field level that NGOs are in direct contact with their intended beneficiaries and working 'shoulder to shoulder' with other agencies, or governmental entities, with the aim of assisting the same group. It is at this level that the needs of the affected population can be most easily assessed and where the population has a possibility of directly influencing the priorities and implementation strategies of the NGOs. It is also at this level that any overlapping and wastage of resources can be most easily detected, especially by the beneficiaries themselves.

Thus one can expect that project coordination will be the main focus of the agencies involved in the coordination arrangement in order to establish common intra-NGO arrangements aimed at reducing the pressure or logistical burden on single agencies. This domain is usually reserved for field representatives of NGOs and UN agencies, local authorities or influential groups and, at times, community organisations. Depending on the degree of authority humanitarian agencies have delegated to their representatives, there will be the possibility for rapid and on the spot decision-making to change programmes and strategies if they are deemed detrimental or to be failing to meet local requirements. In such smaller locations, humanitarian workers have a better chance to become acquainted at a personal level and if the chemistry between staff members is positive, joint solutions to any problems that arise are more easily found and appropriate organisational arrangements made, setting aside institutional self-interests for the collective good. Or, as Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 20) observe, 'the greater the commitment and the closer that agencies get to people in need of assistance and protection, the greater the likelihood of coordination.' It comes as less of a surprise, then, to learn that organisations that usually refuse to be drawn into coordination arrangements, such as ICRC or MSF, will enter into coordination at the field level. The reason is, as staff members of both organisations summarised in Afghanistan (personal communication, 1999), that the benefits of doing so are so obvious they opt for more pragmatic approaches rather than excusing their absence by referring to their mandates.

Also at the field level, it is possible to find some degree of specialised coordination in the form of subgroups for health, sanitation, or other specific and locally identified problems. NGO staff with project responsibility within these thematic fields meet in these coordination groups and bring their specific knowledge of both the problems and the available resources into the interagency discussions. Having a common professional background and 'language' might then ease the interaction and help form a common understanding of both the problem and the possible solution.

Nevertheless, even at this level one might find several coordination entities, even among NGOs, if, for instance, a national coordination body wishes to establish a presence there despite an existing local establishment. As a result, NGOs might find themselves being members of several coordination bodies in the same district, as was the situation in Herat, Afghanistan, by the late 1990s.

*The National Level*

When we move up to the national coordination level it appears that project details are left out and time and energy devoted to wider programme coordination. This would then include policy and standard formulation and interaction and information exchange with Government entities and directors and heads of UN agencies, as well as embassies and donor representation. Decisions at this level will be based on information from the field, policy guidelines from international head offices and an adaptation to the interests of a wider group of stakeholders, such as the donors. But while the technical staff of the NGOs are more frequently involved in subcommittees or task groups within the coordinating bodies, it is the heads of agencies that take part in policy consultation and more strategic coordination. If we take Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as examples, it is at the national level that interaction with donors and UN agencies is formalised, and where the NGO coordination bodies have their secretariat. Here visitors, evaluators and donors are received and these offices might also function as an information and advocacy department for the NGO's members. This follows naturally from the fact that many NGO coordination bodies compile information about the activities of their members (ACBAR 1998) and can often provide an overview of the humanitarian situation in the country or region (ACBAR 1998) as well as the funding made available for the humanitarian operation (ACBAR 1998).

Common structures or services that the wider NGO community might make use of are thus often located at the head offices of the coordinating bodies. Again taking Afghanistan as an example, this could include survey and monitoring/evaluation units, common training facilities, libraries and internet access or practical arrangements such as mailboxes and access to radio communication equipment. The national coordination entities would be the natural point for the introduction of international standards for the wider NGO community, like the Sphere Project, the Code of Conduct and ideas on how to 'Do no Harm' (Anderson 1996). At this level it should also be possible to collect and synthesise lessons learned from the various field locations, and develop common policy on issues of common interest or importance. This could include a common strategy for engaging with armed groups, encouraging a wider cover of aid distribution if there is a national imbalance, or weighing the needs of different areas or groups against each other if there are limitations on available resources. If NGOs are involved in the UN-led Consolidated Appeal Process, this would also be the level where national priorities are likely to be set, and where the different humanitarian agencies meet to set common priorities and establish criteria for selecting projects to be included in an internationally launched appeal.

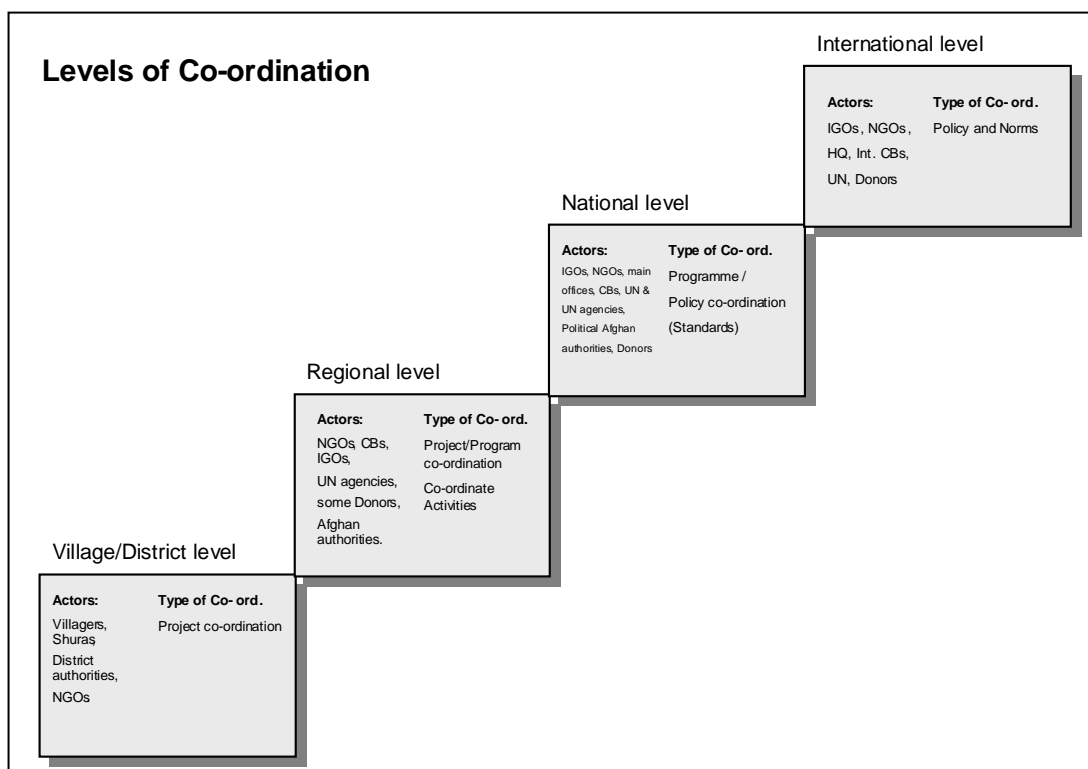
In theory it should also be the place where grassroots and civil society organisations could get in contact with the wider NGO community and be able to seek information about the various agencies and their activities in order to ask for assistance, or, if needed, to lodge complaints about NGO activities.

*The International Level*

At the international level overall policy concerns and principles are the main focus, based mostly on information from the national level but informed by media and influenced by national and international actors. The demand for a rights-based approach, the emphasis on ensuring gender sensitive programming and the focus on human rights, particularly the rights of women and children, have all been formulated and introduced at the international level. One has furthermore seen that advocacy work undertaken by groups of NGOs at this level has yielded results, and led to a ratification of principles by the UN or interagency bodies, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Prominent examples here are the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL 2002), and the ICVA policy statement on gender perspective in humanitarian assistance (IASC 1999).

However, as noted earlier, NGO representation at this level is not necessarily representative of the wider NGO community and least of all of community-based groups or grassroots organisations. These have to depend largely on international NGOs, with an engagement in the same field as the local organisation, to advocate on their behalf or bring their concerns to the attention of the world community. One example is the Afghan NGO Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA), which made use of international human rights organisations to distribute information about human rights violations in Afghanistan, reducing their own vulnerability in the field (personal communication, Peshawar, 2000). This means that, in the final analysis, both forced migrants and national NGOs are dependent on the will and interests of international NGOs to communicate their concerns at the level where policy is made and strategic issues decided that have a major influence on funding prioritisation.

Box 11 below present a diagram that identifies the different actors involved at these different levels and the different types of coordination activity in which they are involved.



**Box 11:** Levels and Types of Coordination Arrangements Identified in Afghanistan

**Source:** Author, drawing A. Fahim (1999)

This illustration further suggests that there is no direct link between the village or district and the international level. There is instead a range of steps, where both upward and downward flows of information might depend on the will and ability of persons, individuals, organisations and coordination arrangements, at each level, to forward it in either direction. This information system appears to be particularly fragmented in the NGO sector and is probably further disrupted by a contracting system that has become increasingly popular. Largely influenced by liberal market economy thinking, NGOs are now contracted to undertake projects or parts of projects for international NGOs or UN agencies, often based upon a needs assessment undertaken by a third party. While this might be cost effective, at the same time, it can inhibit direct interaction between decision-makers within humanitarian agencies and their intended beneficiaries, thus disrupting the direct communication link that could ensure a higher degree of awareness of the problems and viewpoints of, for instance, forced migrants. The fact remains that the contacts forced migrants have with humanitarian agencies are mainly through the national field-based project staff of national and international NGOs; that is, those who are farthest away from the decision-making processes of the NGO community.

### 3.6. Beneficiaries Involvement in NGO Coordination

Given the high importance placed on beneficiary participation at all levels of needs identification and project implementation, it is interesting to note that, as far as the literature review and examination of field arrangements have been able to establish,

this topic has received hardly any attention among coordinating bodies. Jon Bennett confirmed in 1998 that he had not come across any cases through his research where the intended beneficiaries were included in the coordination arrangement, although he did not see any reason why this could not be done (personal communication, 1998). A review of the activities of the coordination arrangements included in this study establishes that none of them have any direct contact with, or a formalised meeting or coordination system with, civil society groups or forced migrants. The closest one gets to this are cases such as the prisoner advocacy group formed by CHA in Sri Lanka, where direct contact was established with a small group of intended beneficiaries, as well as with the coordination body for human rights NGOs which existed in Aceh. In this case, the NGOs involved not only had first hand experience through their direct contact with victims of human rights abuses, but also became targets themselves, and had their staff tortured and killed (personal communication, 2000).

It might be argued that, even if the coordinating bodies do not take any active steps to consult the forced migrants or see the protection of their rights as an important element of their activities, the forced migrants' influence on practical and policy matters might still be secured through NGOs working with them that then holds membership in such coordinating bodies. The NGOs might there present the views and concerns of the forced migrants, and thus indirectly represent their interests in any given coordination arrangement. Their ability to do so would, arguably and as earlier documented, depend on their level of contact with the forced migrants and the methods they make use of when interacting with them. Moreover, there would have to be organisational willingness and capacity at all levels of the organisation, including individual employees, to act as spokespersons for the forced migrants. Interestingly, Oxfam is one of the few NGOs to have brought such issues up for debate; or, as Cummins states, to 'challenge the NGOs to think creatively about alternative futures' (Eade 1996: 13), through raising the following two questions:

- How can NGOs most effectively 'scale up' from field experience to policy-making and become public voices for the victims of violence?
- How can NGOs 'scale down' or redirect their work to be attuned to the communities' own perceptions of their survival and development needs?

Finally, it could again be mentioned that such a lack of consultation with and representation of forced migrants in coordination arrangements stands in contrast to the expressed policy and guidelines of major institutions, such as the OECD (1997) and the World Bank (2000), which all stress the need to incorporate them into the decision and implementation processes. An illustrative example here is found in a Policy Statement (OECD 1997) of the OECD Development Assistance Committee:

*Developing countries are ultimately responsible for their own development. This cardinal principle of development cooperation must be respected – even in countries in crisis, and even when division is rife and local capacities are severely weakened. The task of international assistance is to help strengthen a country's indigenous capacities. This must be done in ways that are even-handed and that encourage broad participation throughout society. This also means ensuring that programmes address the special need of women, children and youth who often bear the brunt of the consequences of conflict.*

Arguably then, to follow this line of reasoning, if, or when, a local community or a group of forced migrants are not in a position to present their views, or, possibly, are not invited to do so, the best place for NGOs to share such knowledge with the wider NGO community and thereby shape assistance or secure protection for the forced migrants, would, naturally, be in an NGO coordinating body. If these act in accordance with theory, such a forum could ensure awareness of a particular situation or problem, and thus be in a position to address the challenges in a coordinated manner in order to provide the most effective, cost efficient and sustainable response. This assumption will certainly be examined through the fieldwork, particularly as regards the interaction between forced migrants and NGOs, which has to be the foundation for NGOs' ability to represent the views of forced migrants.

### 3.7. Conclusion

It can be argued that the establishment of an NGO coordination mechanism in complex political emergencies is largely determined by the needs, as judged by NGOs operating in each specific CPE, for an organisation to represent their interests. The 'need' could be brought about by the agencies acknowledging that they can increase their effectiveness and efficiency in aid provision in that given location, or by recognition among the NGOs that they can gain further influence from establishing a common representative entity to interact with governments, warlords or even the United Nations or external donors. How such coordination bodies are organised, the degree of formality and which activities and services they establish would then depend on the interests of the NGOs involved, rather than being based on a blueprint or any prescribed NGO coordination arrangement. It is the lack of a unified and international NGO coordination superstructure and the diversity of NGOs and their fields of work that seems to ensure the multiplicity of NGO coordination arrangements at a national level.

It seems to be well documented that the NGOs, as a rule, will opt for a horizontal coordination structure and resist attempts to be steered or controlled by one organisation or one coordinator, if this is not done in a way that enhances the capacity of the majority of agencies and is seen to be beneficial for their entire engagement and fund raising. Without these conditions, attempts to control or dominate will easily lead to a break-up of the coordination arrangement, as was done by the national NGOs in Afghanistan, who established their own coordination body when they felt underrepresented in the larger one. However, even in a non-authoritative coordination arrangement differences are likely to exist, as some agencies might argue that coordination efforts should be restricted to information exchange to minimise duplication and overlaps, while others might advocate more integrated and commonly planned and executed NGO activities.

NGOs striving for independence, often supported by individual donors, will ultimately develop resistance to being too tightly governed by a national government or directed by a UN agency or a UN Coordinator. This becomes particularly apparent in complex political emergencies, where there might not be an accepted or functioning government, and the UN system tends to be fragmented and its role possibly contested by the NGOs. In addition, where the UN is engaged in political

efforts that might be seen as contrary to humanitarian values, or sets to administer UN sanctions, the NGOs might, as pointed out by Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 1), 'feel forced to distance themselves explicitly from a non-neutral UN.'

Arguably, the distinction between operational and strategic coordination is less useful the closer one comes to the field, while simultaneously, incentives for establishing effective and pragmatic coordination arrangements increase the closer the organisations and their staff get to their intended beneficiaries. One might therefore assume that the coordination arrangements most likely to obtain positive and practical results for the forced migrants would be those based in areas where the forced migrants are likely to return or are permanently or temporarily displaced. However, to combine this operational advantage with strategic coordination efforts, NGOs would then, on the one hand, have to be able to transform their learning and the 'voice of the forced migrants' into strategic policy issues that can be pursued in national or international coordination arrangements or policy-making organs, such as the IASC or UN bodies; while on the other hand, being able to operationalise international standards in their work at the field level.

They also need to be willing to inform forced migrants of their rights, even if the NGOs themselves might not be in a position to assist them through their own efforts. One NGO is usually not in a position to deliver everything that a forced migrant is in need of or may be entitled to under international conventions. This can only come from a diversity of views, expertise and implementation strategies within a coordination arrangement capable of ensuring the widest possible ability to respond to the diverse needs of different groups, not merely ensure that each forced migrant receives exactly the same assistance. This again leads to the conclusion that a facilitated coordination strategy is likely to be most beneficial in complex political emergencies if built on a set of common norms and standards as well as an understanding of the complexity of each political emergency situation; and, moreover, with the necessary flexibility to respond to both the short and longer term needs of the forced migrants the NGOs aim to assist. Such a coordination approach might include and commit larger numbers of agencies and reduce the need for structured coordination in situations of uncertainty, because it would allow for the use of multiple approaches, with greater or lesser degrees of coordination, rather than risking exclusion by insisting on only one method or approach.

As well as the above assumptions, which need to be examined and tested through the fieldwork, there are a number of further questions emerging from a comparison of theory and experience from various coordination arrangements. In this chapter it has been argued that NGO advocacy activities and coordination efforts at the international level have achieved substantial benefit for forced migrants in establishing their rights to assistance and securing minimum standards of humanitarian assistance. There is, however, a need to see if similar benefits are secured at the national and local level where, in contrast to the international NGO coordination level, which is dominated by a few multinational NGO families, the NGO community is much more diverse and, probably, to a larger extent competing for funding and recognition.

There thus appears a need to review the extent of the influence forced migrants might exercise on NGO coordination bodies or processes, or on single NGOs, either



directly, through consultation or representation, or indirectly, through the NGO members' ability to 'scale up' field knowledge, as well as their analysis of forced migrants' needs for assistance and protection. This will then need to include the specific needs of different subgroups of forced migrants, like women, children and minority groups. It will be important here to test the knowledge NGO field staff have of the vulnerability and strengths of groups of forced migrants, and to consider how this knowledge might be transformed into collective knowledge of the NGOs and NGO coordination bodies, to then be acted upon in an efficient and effective manner. It is assumed that a starting point would be to establish trust and a degree of knowledge of each other, as well as a common understanding between NGOs and forced migrants on the situation they live in and the diverse challenges they confront. One could then look further, to see if they have been able not only to look into the day to day needs, but also to capture the longer-term needs of the forced migrants and meet these in a way that enhances sustainability and decreases dependency.

Before the NGOs, their activities and the NGO coordination arrangements in Afghanistan are presented and discussed, the next chapter will detail the research methodology established. Especially for Afghanistan was it a challenge to devise a methodology that would be able to control possible biases and challenges posed by conducting research in a complex political emergency and under one of the most repressive and strict groups encountered, the Taliban.

## 4. Field Methodology

This chapter presents the field methodology used for the empirical investigation in Afghanistan, Aceh Province of Indonesia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sri Lanka. It introduces the particular challenges of researching in conflict areas, for then to dwell on the research collaboration and teamwork that formed part of this research project before providing details of how the field research in Afghanistan was organised.

Special attention is here paid to the selection and training of interpreters and surveyors before the specific Afghan field methodology is presented, outlining in detail how the empirical field investigation was organised. This, furthermore, includes a discussion on what specific challenges the Taliban regime posed for securing confidentiality and enabling the necessary trust with the informants. Finally the need for a rigorous data verification in such a conflict context is discussed and, moreover, how feedback to the informants was secured.

This chapter will not only describe the field methodology applied, but also show how this methodology was adapted to meet the unique situation in Afghanistan and how, in line with the objective of this research, it enabled the inclusion of the different stakeholders in the research and data verification process.

### 4.1. Contextual Challenges

From the outset, the field research undertaken for this thesis encountered a number of challenges in enabling and ensuring an adequate and reliable data collection process, to test the hypothesis and sub-thesis by using the dependent and independent variables identified. The main field research was undertaken in Afghanistan between 1999 and 2001, a period marked by growing alienation between the international community and the Taliban regime, between groups of NGOs and between NGOs and the United Nations. Research for the supportive cases was undertaken in Aceh Province, Indonesia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sri Lanka. While political problems of the kind experienced in Afghanistan were not encountered, conducting research in such fragile or conflict-affected environments nevertheless still presented some particular methodological challenges.

Devereux and Hoddinott's advice (1993: xi), that '[“C”ontextual” and “methodological” considerations should be considered jointly, not as two distinct categories in which the first obstructs the pursuit of the second’, was taken on board, and care was taken to establish a research methodology adaptive enough to respond to the challenges imposed by context, while at the same time robust enough to enable triangulation of data.

The Afghan context posed a range of contextual challenges: the political context of a repressive Taliban regime; a cultural/religious context in which a conservative and male-dominated society imposed strict restrictions on interaction between women and men; a humanitarian context demanding both emergency relief and rehabilitation and development assistance; and a human resource context which could provide few Afghan researchers or trained interpreters. As regards the secondary research contexts, in Aceh Province of Indonesia and Sri Lanka there were ongoing armed conflicts during the research period, although on varying scales, while Bosnia and Herzegovina was in a post-conflict phase in which the population (and the Government) was struggling to overcome scars inflicted by the war.

To meet these contextual challenges, and counter a range of possible biases, multiple research methods were applied, ranging from focus group interviews via open semi-structured and structured interviews to surveys. The researcher also worked both within a team with national researchers, individually with an interpreter and alone when interviewing English speaking NGO staff, UN officials and government officials.

## 4.2. Researching in Conflict Areas

Before detailing the research methodology selected to counter and take into account the contextual challenges mentioned above, there is a need to explain how the fieldwork was organised to ensure an unbiased and accurate recording of information, when, to a large extent, it depended on the use of interpreters to conduct the field interviews and surveys.

The field research for this thesis was undertaken between 1999 and 2001 in several different geographical locations, both in conflict and post-conflict areas and countries, although its main focus was on Afghanistan. Here the foundation was laid during a three-month research period in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the spring of 1999, which included a review of the five NGO coordinating bodies for Afghanistan. This was at their request, after becoming aware of the ongoing research project. Involvement in three PRDU research projects then brought the author to the Aceh Province of Indonesia, where an international NGO was engaged in mediation of a longstanding conflict; to Bosnia and Herzegovina for a review of the Humanitarian Mine Action programme; and, finally, to Sri Lanka for a review of the challenges posed to the NGO sector and their coordination structure in the light of new challenges emerging in a post-conflict setting. In addition, there was participation in an evaluation of needs and vulnerability assessment undertaken by the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) of four UN agencies (OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP) operating in Afghanistan, including research on the activities and attitudes of NGOs, the Afghan government and local communities, as well as a wider range of UN agencies.

Throughout this research different forms of working relationship were applied during the different phases: the initial field phase in Afghanistan was carried out in a team of three Norwegian researchers with Afghan research assistants/interpreters; the review of the NGO coordination mechanism in Sri Lanka was conducted by a team from PRDU and the University of York; the evaluation of the UN agencies' needs

and vulnerability assessment was undertaken in a mixed Norwegian/Afghan team; and the evaluation of the NGO coordinating bodies by a mixed Norwegian/British/Afghan team. On the other hand, the research in Aceh Province of Indonesia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina was undertaken with a single interpreter, hired locally. This variation in approach was necessitated both by the specific circumstances in the different locations and the type of research to be conducted. However, it was also an acknowledgment of the value of collaborating with researchers from different research fields and of working in a team in challenging and possibly dangerous locations.

#### **4.2.1. Reviewing Research Methodology Literature**

While preparing for the field research, information on research methodology was sought from a range of different sources, extracting experience from the more general methodology literature and from literature addressing the specific methodological challenges of working in conflict areas. A rich literature resource exists on research in development-oriented environments (see Selener (1997); Denscombe (1998) and Robson (2002)), which outlines the general research methods, and there are the various publications by Chambers on participatory methods of assessment (Chambers 1983: 111), including his listing of five biases that might influence a development worker or a researcher. Other works provide a useful understanding of interaction with local communities, drawing on experience from the fields of anthropology and geography (see Rudqvist (1991); Vandsemb (1995); Gardner (1997)). Less is written on the subject of researching in conflict areas, but there are publications that provide a more general overview of the different aspects of working in dangerous environments: 'Dangerous Fieldwork' (Lee 1995) and 'Fieldwork under Fire' (Nordstrom and Robben 1995). While the latter work is more focused on the practical and psychological problems encountered when working in violent conflict, or with informers marked by the conflict, the first work covers a range of practical issues to be considered before and during the fieldwork; it includes an analysis of the different kinds of danger the researcher might be exposed to, the issue of gaining access, and the role of the 'gatekeeper' whom the researcher might use to gain contact with the local community. Furthermore, the work addresses personal security issues, such as the risk of being accused of spying when gathering information, and suggests measures to reduce such risk.

For more specific guidance on data gathering in conflict situations the article 'Researching under Fire: Issues for Consideration When Collecting Data and Information in War Circumstances, with Specific Reference to Relief and Reconstruction projects' (Barakat and Ellis 1997) was referred to. This work draws on Chambers, and covers some of the same ground as Lee, but is more specific on how to overcome time limits and limitations in available information, and provides suggestions for ways of overcoming these through applying a wide range of information gathering techniques. Furthermore, it provides insight into the importance of the self-presentation of the researcher, as well as addressing the difficulties of maintaining impartiality when faced with the suffering of war; it also discusses how this can be a source of stress for both the researcher and the informants. Lately, Barakat, Chard et.al. (2002) have developed this concept further

and suggests a ‘composite approach’, combining different methodological approaches, for researching in contexts of war and armed conflict.

While the above-mentioned literature proved very useful in designing the research approach and methodology adopted, hardly any methodological literature identified dealt with the challenges and limitations posed by working with and through interpreters, except for a more general introduction provided by Devereux and Hoddinott (1993). Limited guidance was provided by the literature on the question of whether interpreters could take on roles such as ‘cultural translator’ and ‘security advisor’ in addition to their interpretation task, and how the communication skills of the interpreter might be of particular importance in a country like Afghanistan with its high degree of illiteracy and thus dependence on oral communication. Here the author had to draw to a large extent on lessons from his own previous work experience in Afghanistan; in such situations results largely depend on the attitudes of the interpreters and how the working relationship between the researcher and the interpreter develops; so that while the researcher must remain in charge, it is always necessary to be open to suggestions and advice from the interpreter.

#### 4.2.2. Exploring Action Research

Given the author’s intention of bringing to the forefront the views and opinions of the forced migrants on humanitarian assistance in general and the coordination of such assistance in particular, different research strategies aimed at ensuring the inclusion of various stakeholders in the research process were sought. Here a research methodology termed *action research* looked particularly interesting, as it advocated a close relationship between the researcher and those researched. Robson (2002: 7) explains in his introduction to what he terms a ‘Real World Enquiry’, that one view on research methodology is that part of a researcher’s job is to use his or her understanding ‘to suggest ways in which desirable change might take place, and perhaps to monitor the effectiveness of these attempts.’ A way of doing so is through initiating and integrating the initiated changes in the research process, thus terming such processes *action research*. According to Dick (2000) such research methods tends to be:

- Cyclic: similar steps tend to recur, in a similar sequence.
- Participative: the clients and informants are involved as partners, or at least active participants, in the research process.
- Qualitative: it deals more often with language than with numbers; and
- Reflective: critical reflection upon the process and outcomes are important parts of each cycle.

While this might have increased the forced migrants’ influence on the research process, there were nevertheless some basic elements of this research methodology that seemed rather challenging to feasibility in the Afghan context. A basic question was whether it would be possible to establish the necessary degree of trust with the forced migrants to enable this process; and even if that were possible, whether the security situation would permit the researcher either to stay on in the area to conclude the processes initiated or to return to repeat or develop the participative process. Furthermore, and again related to trust, would the informants be willing to engage in a participatory process, sharing what might be sensitive information on the

village and their migration patterns, when the conflict had not fully come to an end and the Taliban were keeping a very close watch on both villagers and, not least, foreigners.

A further potential limitation was the possibility of failing to ensure the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in the rehabilitation process, including NGOs and probably the local authorities. Here the researcher, not being of Afghan nationality, could not be an equal partner with the Afghan villagers or the national NGOs, but would be seen as an outsider, possibly regarded as having connections with international NGOs and donors. This had the potential to jeopardise the entire research process and place the relationship between researcher and villagers at risk, if initiatives from the forced migrants did not come through. Consideration of all these potential hazards to the research process led to a concern that, in the Afghan context, an *action research* approach would not yield the expected results, but would rather increase the security risk for both researcher and the researched, and thus the risk of failure. Both practical and ethical considerations therefore argued against the adoption of an action research approach, and more conventional, though innovative, research methods were sought.

A principal aim was to try to develop a research strategy that would ensure a high degree of interaction with, and not solely data collection from, the various informants, and, moreover, to pursue issues raised by forced migrants through the NGO system and into the NGO coordinating bodies. It was thought important to ensure the sharing and correction of initial findings, so that whatever knowledge and understanding was generated by the researcher would be open for correction and would also remain with the informants, for them to use to make their own choices or as a basis to initiate action.

#### **4.2.3. Triangulation of Data**

Having decided against the action research approach, the challenge was to set out a methodology that drew on a number of methods designed to counter the various methodological challenges that existed; and thus various approaches to triangulation in data collection were considered. The argument for triangulation is, according to Arksey and Knight (1999: 21) that ‘data are obtained from a wide range of different and multiple sources, using a variety of methods, investigators or theories’. There are, according to these authors, four different types of triangulation that might enhance the quality of research enquiries: methodological triangulation; data triangulation; investigator triangulation; and theoretical triangulation (1999: 23). Given that there was the possibility of working in a research team with an anthropologist and a sociologist, this allowed for a degree of investigator triangulation and a degree of theoretical questioning from these respective theoretical viewpoints throughout the fieldwork and pre-analysis period, though to a much lesser extent in the actual writing up period. The next challenge was to ensure a degree of triangulation in the selection of methodology and data sources.

As regards methodology, this consequently led to the application of a number of methods and techniques, ranging from observation, focus group interviews, open, semi-structured and structured interviews to surveys conducted by Afghan research

assistants and by survey forms distributed to all NGOs holding membership in an NGO coordination body. To ensure triangulation of data, these were collected at the village level, both among those who had been forced migrants and those who had not migrated, and also in two different villages, to complement the primary findings. Field staff of NGOs operating in these villages were then interviewed, as were the regional managers of these NGOs, supplemented by interviews with a broad variety of NGOs operating in Herat, and staff of NGO coordinating bodies, UN agencies and local authorities. At the national level NGO directors of the same agencies as those interviewed in Herat were interviewed, as well as a representative selection of NGOs and directors of NGO coordinating bodies. Finally, when researching needs assessment methods applied by the various humanitarian agencies, a selection of directors and staff of UN agencies and NGOs, based in Kabul, Ghazni, Zabul, Kandahar and Herat provinces, as well as representatives of the Taliban administration in these same locations, were interviewed.

To allow for the proper handling of such vast and varied data material, computer software for qualitative data analysis, termed NUD\*IST was applied, the use of which is described in more detail by Robson (2002: 467-472).

### 4.3. Research Collaboration and Team Work

With the challenges identified for conducting research in Afghanistan, it became obvious that the research could benefit from collaboration with other researchers. From a practical point of view it would clearly make organising the field work easier, but far more important was the fact that it would enable access to the female population and ensure the widest possible collection of information, through different theoretical and research approaches. Thus a discussion was initiated to explore the possibility of collaborating with two other Norwegian researchers specialising on Afghanistan. These were Karin Ask, an anthropologist specialising in the study of women in Islamic societies (Ask and Tjomsland 1998), and Kristian Berg Harpviken, a sociologist with a long history of working and researching in Afghanistan (Harpviken 1996;1997;1999). While each of the researchers had their own research topics to pursue, there was still a large degree of communality, and, not least, a need for each to document and analyse the context in which forced migration and provision of humanitarian assistance was taking place.

The field reviews of the NGO coordinating bodies and the UN agencies were conducted with three collaborators: an Afghan architect, Dr. Abdul W. Najimi, who has considerable work experience with UN agencies and NGOs; Mohammad Sulieman, who also had NGO experience; and a Norwegian midwife, Synne Holan, who gained access to women using locally employed Afghan female interpreters or, on occasion, Afghan men.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina a former forced migrant, who had voluntarily returned from Norway, was employed as interpreter and research assistant, while in Aceh Province a student with good connections to student and human rights organisations was selected. Both of these added valuable insights into the research topics through their own experiences, shared throughout the long journeys, over meals and while waiting for appointments.

While more time did have to be spent on organising travel, accommodation, interpreters and transport for a larger team, such time spent on logistics and practicalities was far outweighed by the advantage of collaborating with other researchers. The possibility of having different theoretical interpretations and explanations of initial findings, to be constantly challenged on research methodology and approaches, and to have an ongoing debate on how to improve the research and draw out synergy effects from the parallel work undertaken in the villages where different groups of informants were interviewed, certainly enhanced both data collection and analysis. The psychological effect of being in a group where we could share information and concerns should also not be overlooked, not least when the Taliban created problems for the female interpreter and we started to understand that the security situation was more fragile than commonly presented.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.4. Preparing for Field Research in Afghanistan

A range of practical issues had to be taken into account when preparing for the field research in Afghanistan. This included the selection of research area, ways to contact and establish trust with local communities to be allowed to undertake research there, with the NGO community for them to volunteer information and, certainly, establish a degree of communication with the Taliban without compromising on the research methods.

##### 4.4.1. Selection of the Main Research Area in Afghanistan

The selection of the research area inside Afghanistan was of major concern, as it needed to represent a typical way of life which a number of migrants had been forced to leave for a lengthy period of time, taking refuge both externally and internally, and to which a significant number had returned, voluntarily or by force. There was also a number of characteristics that ideally should be found in the same area: the location should be a rural habitation but with proximity to a city, with a representation of both NGOs and UN agencies, and, ideally, a local coordination structure. In addition, to counter possible biases emerging from the authors' previous NGO employment in Afghanistan, the research should not be undertaken in an area where the author had previously had an active role in project selection, implementation or evaluation. Finally, given the rather high security risk that prevailed in Afghanistan in early 1999, and a warning issued by many embassies against travelling in Afghanistan, the possibility for a rapid evacuation from the field location had also to be considered.<sup>37</sup>

Based on these criteria a number of locations in different parts of Afghanistan was identified, and discussed with humanitarian agencies working there. Two geographical areas emerged initially as most suitable: the Azra District in Logar

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<sup>36</sup> Not only were there a number of attacks and robberies on NGO offices, but the team also became aware of a possibility that an uprising against the Taliban was in the making, aided by Iran.

<sup>37</sup> The Norwegian Embassy in Pakistan was consulted during this process, and was informed about the security assessment and evacuation plan made by the team before departure to Afghanistan.



Province just outside Kabul city, and villages on the outskirts of Herat city in western Afghanistan.

In Azra UN agencies and NGOs had collaborated on a repatriation and resettlement project termed the Greater Azra Project (Joint Reintegration Programme Unit 2000). However, when contacting agencies in Peshawar, Pakistan, it emerged that the project had been stopped due to a lack of funding. This had, according to the UNHCR Protection Officer (private communication, Peshawar, 1999), caused a high degree of alienation against the humanitarian agencies among refugees planning to return in the spring of 1999, and thus a degree of negative biases against both UN agencies and NGOs that was judged as not being representative of the majority of Afghan forced migrants.

Herat, however, seemed to meet more of the requirements for a way of life that was typical of Afghan forced migration, and, in addition, had a reasonable degree of political stability and representation of humanitarian agencies. There was, furthermore, a steady voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran reported by the UNHCR (1999) and, according to NGOs operating in Herat (personal communication, 1999), a degree of forced expulsion. A factor that could be judged in either a positive or a negative way for the purposes of the research was that there had been very limited humanitarian support for the Afghan refugees residing in Iran, compared to the almost equal number that had fled to Pakistan. Thus little information was available about their situation while in exile or their flight and return patterns. While this meant that there would be less research material to draw on, it could also be argued that the intended research could add to the knowledge of this large group of forced migrants that took refuge in Iran, and of how they had coped there, deprived of much of the international assistance that refugees in Pakistan enjoyed. A further positive factor for selecting the Herat region was the presence of a local NGO coordination organisation, the NGOs' Coordination Body (NCB), established by NGOs based in Herat.

The team thus opted for locating the research project in Herat, and the exact field location was decided after consultation with Afghan and international NGOs operating there. Among the requirements was that the village had to be of a reasonable size; more than one NGO should have projects there; it needed a high degree of forced migration and a degree of repatriation; and, furthermore, the presence of an NGO that could act as a gatekeeper to the villagers. While a larger area in the outskirts of Herat was singled out as meeting both the overarching and the more specific requirements, the gatekeeper function was provided by an Afghan NGO running Mine Awareness training. This had a husband and wife team that had been living and working in the village of Izhaq Suleiman for a couple of weeks, situated half an hour's drive from Herat city in the direction of Iran. Not only had this team established a good relationship with both men and women in this village, the NGO director, who was held in high regard within the NGO community, took an interest in our research questions and volunteered to introduce us to the village council, the *shura*, with whom he met frequently to discuss the progress of the mine awareness training.

#### 4.4.2. Establishing Trust With the Local Community

From the first *shura* meeting, the NGO director made it very clear to the villagers that the research team would not bring any projects to the village; interviews were not to determine if the village should receive humanitarian assistance or not, but solely to be able to understand better the situation of Afghans who had been forced migrants, and to establish the capability of humanitarian agencies to aid them and coordinate their activities at the village level. Laying out the background of the team members, and the intended scope of work, the NGO director requested the villagers to discuss whether they would permit the team to conduct the research in the village, and if so, to set a date for a meeting to help the team learn more details about the history and particularity of the village.

Following their internal deliberations the *shura* welcomed the team to conduct research in the village, allowing the female team member to interview women if accompanied by an Afghan female interpreter.

The male team members then undertook a series of focus group meetings/interviews with the village *shura*, to get to know the villagers better and to learn about the village and its war and migration history. Using a series of military and political events in Herat and in Afghanistan, as well as natural disasters that had struck the village, led to the establishment of a common timeline dating back to 1983 as a means of enabling easier identification of when migration and remigration had taken place, or aid had been provided. The next step was a mapping of the 10 different districts, or *mahallas*, that the village was divided into, each named after the mosque of that particular *mahalle*; and a walk through the village with the village *arbab* and members of the *shura*, in order to be introduced to the villagers.

Although the *shura* members gradually lost interest in the research activities, contact was maintained with the elected village representative, the *arbab*, and other central members of the village *shura*, to report progress on our work and inquire about the activities and situation in the village, allowing them to bring forward any concerns or questions that might arise in the village. Consequently, several important pieces of information were conveyed to us during these afternoon talks in the village centre, some of which were ‘decoded’ by the interpreters. One related to an increase in agricultural activities following changed irrigation patterns, which in turn led us to change the interview time to late afternoons in order to avoid disturbing them in their agricultural work. While this led to a reduction in the number of interviews, informants appeared more responsive, as they were not in a rush to complete the interviews.

These informal conversations led us also to understand an internal resource conflict between the traditional agriculturalists and a group of nomads who had settled with their animals on the outskirts of the village, a group against which several informants had expressed strong reservations. The third bit of information was security related, as it conveyed to us that the Taliban had taken a special interest in a neighbouring village that was predominantly inhabited by *Hazaras*. Signals indicated that we should be careful with contacts in this village, though no further explanation was provided. Shortly after our departure from Herat the Taliban struck at the village,

killing a number of men there whom they accused of having received Iranian support to stage a revolt against the Taliban in Western Afghanistan.

Arguably, through establishing a mix of formal and informal meeting points with the villagers a certain degree of trust was established; this not only enabled a smooth research process, but also allowed the villagers to guide us politely in a direction that reduced the demands on them, and to reduce what they regarded as a security risk for the research team and the villagers.

#### **4.4.3. Establishing a Working Relationship With the Taliban Administration**

To ensure that the Taliban administration would be sufficiently reassured so as to keep its attention on the research activities to a minimum, the team asked for a meeting with the Foreign Ministry in Herat responsible for contact with non-Afghans and NGOs. On that occasion the team presented a brief outline of the research and where and how the fieldwork was planned to take place. While promising the Minister a report on our main findings, the team was able to explore a number of issues relating to the relationship between the Taliban administration and the NGOs. Information about refugee return and security was also touched upon in these discussions, and the team was questioned in what appeared to be an examination to confirm that we did have prior knowledge about Afghanistan and humanitarian assistance, as we claimed.

A security incident with the female interpreter and her brother, as they were observed in a car with a male team member on the way to their home after a late return from the field, caused a temporary episode of tension that was resolved through personal contact with the Taliban. Their main concern, it appeared, was to ensure that their orders on gender segregation were adhered to, rather than to punish those who might have violated their instructions, if the offence was a minor one.

Assuming that the Taliban, both in our living quarters and during the fieldwork, closely followed our activities we ensured inclusion of the main research issues in a brief report submitted to the authorities upon departure from Herat. The report was acknowledged by the Minister but was, apparently, of no further interest to him.

This could indicate that, by informing the Taliban before starting our research and actively defusing the security incident when that occurred, the team managed to reduce the suspicion against foreigners that prevailed during this period of time. Furthermore, as far as the team has been able to establish, none of our informants, interpreters or others who assisted during the fieldwork experienced any problems in the aftermath of the fieldwork, despite the armed uprising and massive arrests that followed by mid-May 1999.

#### **4.4.4. Introduction to the NGO and UN Community**

Through the NGOs with which the team had established contact in Pakistan, an introduction was made to the NGO coordinating body in Herat and an invitation was

extended for participation in their meeting. Here the team was introduced to the humanitarian agencies and a brief outline of the research projects was provided. Throughout the research period in Herat the author was invited as an observer to NGO- and UN-convened coordination meetings, including those relating to security issues. Through different NGOs, arrangements were made for renting a car with a driver and a house in Herat city, for borrowing communication equipment to link up to the NGO security system, and for introductions to possible interpreters and computer operators. However, care was taken not to rent a car from an NGO actively operating in Izhaq Suleiman village, or to hire staff previously employed by agencies with projects in that village.

The dusk and dawn curfew that was imposed in Herat limited social interaction with the NGO community and the population at large, although invitations to barbeques and other social gatherings enabled a degree of informal contact.

At the national level initial contact with the NGO coordinating bodies was facilitated through the review they had commissioned, and where they beforehand offering this assignment had been informed about the ongoing research programme.

#### **4.4.5. Offsetting Biases and Protecting Informers**

Given the author's NGO background a number of precautions were taken to offset possible biases. Mentioned above was the selection of a villages the author neither had paid any previous visits to and nor had a presence of an NGOs the author had either worked with or provided project funding for.

Moreover, the author ensured at the start of each interview and presentation to explain the research project in details and how the identity of the informants and the actual information would be protected given the highly sensitive environment the research was conducted in. NGO staff interviewed was furthermore explained that the author no longer held any formal relationship with previous NGO employers. All informants were guaranteed that they would not be quoted by name in the thesis and that all survey forms would be anonymous. Based on the presentation and insurances of protection of sources the informants were asked if they accepted to be interviewed or if they declined. They all accepted.

### **4.5. Selection and Training of Interpreters and Surveyors**

As indicated in the theory review, the selection of interpreters and surveyors is an issue of particular concern, heightened by the high degree of uncertainty that enshrouds field research in a location like Herat. The role of the interpreter is not only to interpret what is spoken or written, but also to decode signals of mistrust towards the researcher or judge security risks that might be encountered. There also needs to be a very high degree of trust and a good working relationship between the researcher and the interpreter, as well as ample time to sit and discuss the findings and signals that might have been picked up during the course of the working day. Devereux and Hoddinott (1993: 27) discuss whether research assistants should be drawn from the community in which the research is to be conducted, or brought in

from outside, balancing the advantages of local knowledge against possible affiliations and interests. They do not, however, provide any definitive solution to the dilemma, except to underline the importance of the assistant's ability to 'get on well with the respondents'. Given the general suspicion against 'outsiders' in Afghanistan, the research team decided on employing interpreters locally in Herat, seeking persons with a high degree of local knowledge, a wide contact net, and, furthermore, good social standing and an ability to build trust with the local population.

To ensure a diversity of skills and experience on the research team, one of the interpreters selected was a middle-aged male medical doctor with work experience with different humanitarian agencies. The other male interpreter was young and had been internally displaced from Kabul for a number of years, during which he had been employed with international medical NGOs, while the female interpreter belonged to an ethnic minority and also had a background working with an international NGO. Thus, while the middle-aged doctor would command respect due to his age and profession, the younger interpreters would be at the age of the majority of the village population, children excluded. When expanding the number of male staff for the survey, similar concerns were discussed and a man in his forties, who had previously worked with the survey unit of the Afghan Development Bank, and a young and enthusiastic data operator with an acceptable command of written English were selected from a test in which a number of young Afghans competed for a job.

However, as the research team had opted to employ local and unprofessional interpreters there was a need to devise a training program to increase the professionalism and uniformity of the research methodology. The starting point was to agree on the meaning of particular words and phrases, such as migration, beneficiaries, development, NGO, participation and gender, making use of this shared knowledge and understanding of the possible cultural and religious sensitivity of some of the phrases to adjust and translate the interview questionnaire. This was first done using traditional written Dari and then adjusted to the language spoken in the village, which again was corrected by an Afghan familiar with NGO jargon who had worked in the same geographical area. Finally, both the questionnaire and the interpreters' interview and communication skills were tested through role-play.

A further step involved agreeing on rules of behaviour in the village and towards the villagers, and a 'code of conduct' under which the interpreters were encouraged to establish contacts on their own. It was also decided that at the end of each working day, experiences and particular findings were to be summarised and discussed, so that the interpreters could share knowledge, observations and analysis, and issues to be followed the next day could be clarified. In the early stages of the interview phase it was important to get feedback on how the questions were understood and if any caused special responses, positive or negative, or had led to the identification of further issues that needed to be included in the questionnaire.

Throughout the interview stage the performance of interpreters was constantly evaluated and they were made aware of our concerns, such as, for example, the precision of their translation, which was a recurring issue as Norwegian team members gradually improved their command of Dari and the interpreters started to get tired of asking the same questions over and over again.

The same Afghan team, excluding the female interpreter and expanded with two other persons, then undertook the survey in both Izhaq Suleiman village and a village closer to Herat city, Sara-e-Nau. One reason for the duplication, apart from that of increasing the number of informants, was to eliminate any biases in the response that might derive from communicating with non-Afghans. Survey forms were expanded, in collaboration with the interpreters, to include information from people recently expelled from Iran, and more specific questions to people who had not been forced migrants, to seek out any variation in responses between migrants and non-migrants.

While less attention was paid to training of interpreters for the interviews with NGO staff and UN agencies in Afghanistan and for the supporting cases, a strong emphasis was placed on confidentiality of information, respect for diverging opinions and a polite and respectful behaviour towards the interviewees.

#### 4.6. Field Methodology for Afghanistan

As this thesis is primarily based on field research conducted in Afghanistan the main focus will be on the field methodology adopted there; however, the methodologies applied in Aceh, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Sri Lanka are first briefly presented here. As described earlier, the research in Aceh and BiH was undertaken in collaboration with a male interpreter, recruited locally, using a semi-structured questionnaire. In Sri Lanka the PRDU team did not make use of interpreters, and, working in English, used both open and semi-structured interviews, either individually or as a team.

Turning to Afghanistan, the field research can be divided into three separate activities: the first being oriented to forced migrants and field NGOs; the second focusing on the wider NGO community and the NGO coordinating bodies; while the third looked at the wider range of humanitarian actors and how they identified and ranked vulnerability and needs within the Afghan population. Given that different types of informant were interviewed, individually and in groups, throughout these three stages, different types of methodology had also to be applied.

In Izhaq Sulaiman village the information gathering started with open interviews with members of the village *shura*, combined with observations at different locations within the village. More general information on the village was then sought from a variety of key informants, like the village *arbab* and male and female NGO staff living in the village.

After the initial round of open interviews, the three members of the team used their preliminary findings to develop a coordinated semi-structured questionnaire that included a core of common questions to be pursued in interviews with both male and female villagers. A series of semi-structured interviews were then conducted in all ten *mahallas*, to gain better knowledge of the village and the inhabitants before starting the main survey. In this first interview round the author initially selected informer from among those suggested by the *shura*, where the requirement was that the informer had been a refugee to Iran and had been re-established in the village for some time. A further requirement in the selection process was to ensure inclusion of

different professions, as small traders, farmers and mullahs, to ensure a certain degree of diversity among informers. Throughout these initial interviews a basic overview of the village, the migration history and the activities of the NGOs were established. Moreover, the survey questions were tested out a total of 45 villagers were interviewed, 28 males by the male researchers and 17 females by the female researcher, covering all 10 *mahallas* of the village.

Activity in the village was furthermore observed at different times during the day, and at different locations, such as in the agricultural fields, in the village 'bazaar', at the mill, or around mosques. This led to open interviews with other key informants as our knowledge of the village structure gradually emerged, such as those having their businesses located at both ends of the village and a larger number of village mullahs. At the upper end, based on the main road, was the 'puncture man' who had a good overview of people travelling to and from Iran and Herat, including illegal smuggling of people, as well as knowledge of work-related movement within the village and towards Herat. At the lower end of the village the man owning the local mill had extensive knowledge of agricultural production, not only in Ishaq Suleiman village but in neighbouring villages as well, since all these villagers came to him to have their milling done. The mullahs held extensive knowledge on the social support system in the village, the *zakat*, as well as more detailed knowledge of the population in their *mahalla*.

While a conscious effort was made to include all sorts of respondent through varying sites and times for selecting informants, the team, nevertheless, makes no claim to have developed a random sample for this part of the data collection.

When planning the survey to be conducted by the Afghan team members in the Mahalle-e- Zooria of Izhaq Sulaiman and the village Sara-e-Nau a random sample strategy was devised. In the latter village each 10th household were selected and minimums of 20 heads of household were interviewed to ensure a random and valid sample. A total of 31 male heads of household were interviewed by the Afghan survey team, and computerised and rechecked by the survey team.

In Herat city a range of semistructured interviews were then conducted with staff and management of the NGOs working in these specific villages, contrasted by interviews with a representative selection of NGOs, ACBAR and NCB, UN agencies and Taliban officials.

For the national NGO survey a questionnaire was developed and was distributed by the five coordination bodies to all their NGO members, and these also collected the responses, delivered to them in sealed envelopes. Out of a total of 252 survey questionnaires distributed to NGOs, 99 agencies responded, with quite a large variation in response between members of the coordination bodies, so that this had to be taken into account when analysing the information. Most notable was the high response rate from SWABAC members, all Afghan NGOs, where uniformity in the answers could be attributed to the fact that the questionnaires had been distributed and collected during a meeting of this coordination body, while the other coordination bodies had distributed the form to all their members by mail. Following the return of the forms, the Afghan research assistant then computerised them, and the team made the subsequent analysis collaboratively.

For the needs and vulnerability assessment the sample of structured interviews included 31 UN staff members, 37 NGO staff, 14 Taliban officials, and 32 Afghan beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The total number of beneficiaries interviewed was much higher than 34 as it included members of focus groups and persons chosen for open-ended interviews. Interviews were conducted in different geographical locations in Afghanistan, in the Kabul, Wardak, Ghazni, Zabul, Kandahar and Herat provinces, to ensure the widest possible sample and ability to make comparisons between rural and urban habitats. A separate summary session was held in each geographical location, enabling a comparison which also took local variations into consideration.

Copies of the survey forms and questionnaires used are attached in appendix 6, and a list providing details of the informants for the interviews and surveys in appendix 7.

#### 4.7. Data Verification and Feedback to Informants

Quality control and feedback to and dialogue with those individuals and organisations interviewed and researched has been an integral part of this research process, with a view to ensuring the highest possible degree of participation and correction of information.

The most rigid quality assurance was applied in the first part of the fieldwork, both in the method of ensuring a correct translation and interpretation of the interviews, and in ensuring that the survey methodology was adhered to. After the interview forms were computerised these were reviewed and compared with the handwritten forms by a senior Afghan, and corrected for language and meaning, although even before that was done, the Afghan survey team and one of the Norwegian researchers had reviewed all the interviews. In addition, they also visited Sara-e-Nau village and checked that the random sampling instructions had been followed by the researchers, through a random sample spot verification of the random sample selection of informers.

The verification of information from Izhaq Sulaiman village, however, was participatory. In this case, the research team compiled a written report on their findings in the village, which was translated into Dari and distributed in the village before being debated and corrected at a meeting to which villagers were invited. In this way the village held in their hands a written report containing a detailed description of the village, which outlined their resources and prioritised their needs, and could be submitted to agencies planning to undertake work in the village. In this way the researchers ensured that villagers were made aware of what information had been collected in the village, and, furthermore, ensured an open verification and correction of the data. In addition, having realised that the villagers had very limited knowledge about the motivation and work of humanitarian agencies, the team gave the village *shura* an introduction to this subject before departing from the village, providing them with an overview of which organisations they could make contact with, if they so decided. The report for the village is attached as appendix 8.



The NGO survey was presented at a workshop for NGO coordinating bodies held in Peshawar, Pakistan in September 1999, and opened up for discussion the interpretation of the survey findings and the response to the suggestion of establishing one common coordination body. This provided valuable additional insight and an understanding of how deep-rooted the conflict between the various NGO groups and coordinating bodies was, as they were able to outline their concerns when asked to voice their reservations about a common NGO coordination arrangement.

The needs and vulnerability assessment was likewise presented to a workshop held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in March 2001, where both UN agencies, NGOs and donors were invited to comment upon the findings. This workshop did not, however, yield the same positive results as the NGO one, as it appeared the various humanitarian actors were less inclined to expose their shortcomings and weaknesses when in the presence of other agencies and, not least, the donors.

Thus, and in line with the triangulation methodology, efforts were made to seek verification of the research data not only among those interviewed, but also in a wider circle of informants who either had knowledge of the situation of forced migrants in Afghanistan or were involved in policy and budget decisions affecting their daily lives.

#### 4.8. Conclusion

Given the exceptional circumstances in Afghanistan the researcher has not only applied a number of different methodologies for data collection, but has also repeated and developed the process over time in order to be informed on developments in the country and to incorporate additional knowledge into the research process. As such, data collection and data analysis were not two distinct and separate processes; rather, analysis started from the outset of the research period to enable adjustment of the data collection process as necessary.

Likewise, given the fluidity on the ground and the limited range of authoritative sources, data collection was subjected to as rigid a quality assurance as possible in the circumstances. It was, moreover, reported back to the informants, to ensure not only verification but that the research knowledge was shared with those contributing to it, at that time in history, and not only made available in English years afterwards.

Of course, much of the quality assurance rests on the interpreters and on their understanding of the subjects researched and their ability to explain both the questions and answers. Thus, every effort was taken to train the interpreters/surveyors and to quality assure their work, a task made easier for the second and third sequence of data collection, as the Afghan research assistant had been educated as an architect in Denmark and not only spoke fluently both English and Norwegian, but also had greater cultural understanding and knowledge of research methodology.

Throughout the various research activities attempts were made to overcome the kind of frequently encountered biases identified by Chambers and confirmed by Ellis and Barakat, even in conflict situations: by actively seeking to visit remote areas where

there might not have been any projects implemented; by seeking information from women, children, ethnic minorities and the poorest segments of the population; and by travelling at different times throughout the year and setting diplomacy aside for thorough inquiry.

The use of multiple methods provided a much wider range of research material, and a greater demand on the researcher to analyse and extract the main conclusions and trends from it. But given the circumstances, it appears to be the only way to ensure the necessary reliability of information collected in a complex political emergency such as exists in Afghanistan.

## 5. The Afghan Context

This Chapter will start with a short introduction to Afghanistan and the complexity of the political and humanitarian emergency of which the Afghans have been victims for more than two decades, causing widespread migration and an urgent need for humanitarian assistance. This includes a presentation of Afghan baseline data, geography and people and an overview of the Afghan conflict and its root causes.

Afghan civil society organisations are then presented more in detail as is traditional understanding of vulnerability and coping strategies developed by the Afghans. A comprehensive historical review is made of how governmental structures have been formed and reformed since the start of the armed conflict. This is followed by an overview of Afghan forced migration history and patterns, and an presentation of the migration status as of 2001.

This Chapter is concluded by a discussion on what would be the best definition of the Afghan conflict by year 2002, is it a complex political emergency or should it rather be presented as an ‘emerging political complex’.

### 5.1. The Complexity of the Afghan Context

There are a number of elements that add to the complexity of the Afghan conflict, and which then influences the range of opportunities and strategies available for Afghan forced migrants and humanitarian organisations assisting them. Notable here is the lack of baseline data, including reliable information on Afghan development and underdevelopment indicators. Moreover, the country’s ethnic and religious composition, the long-lasting conflict and the influence of regional and international actors here, and in this, the politicisation of the humanitarian assistance, are all factors. A further dimension frequently overlooked by the humanitarian agencies is the various elements of Afghan civil society, the degree of vulnerability among the Afghan population in general and forced migrants in particular, and the role and efficiency of Afghan governance structures.

#### 5.1.1. Afghan Baseline Data

*Afghanistan* is ranked as one of the world’s poorest countries, with very low literacy levels and high child mortality rates, although since 1996 the UNDP has stopped including Afghanistan in their Human Development Index owing to a lack of verifiable statistics and an absence of national institutions compiling such figures

(Rubin 2002).<sup>38</sup> The prolonged war has added the problem of large quantities of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) (Nobbs 2000: 41), has destroyed infrastructure and has led to a 'war culture', thus increasing the challenges confronting Afghans and the relief community.

Below in Box 12 is a summary of basic information on Afghanistan, though it should be noted that many of these figures are certainly estimates, or 'guesstimates' as one UN employee described their statistics (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 13). One telling example is the population figure, for which in year 2001 different humanitarian United Nation agencies provided different numbers. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) (see below) estimated the total population at 25 million, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) presented the number as 21.2 millions (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 5), and it is by no means clear if any of these figures includes the more than 3.8 million Afghan refugees registered in neighbouring countries. What is known, however, is that the last census on the Afghan population was undertaken in 1979 and gave a total population figure of 13, 051, 358.<sup>39</sup>

By the end of 2001, according to UNHCR (2002), there were a total of 2 million Afghan refugees registered in Pakistan and 1,482,000 million in Iran, with a further 1.2 million internally displaced within Afghanistan. The UNHCR, however, notes that the official figures provided by the Governments of Pakistan and Iran are 3.3 and 2.3 million respectively. As widely reported by the media, an increasing number of Afghans have left these countries in recent years on various smuggling routes, seeking better living conditions in western countries and Australia.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The 1996 figures were only an upgrading of figures provided by the Kabul government in the early 1990s, and can hardly have been verified for the entire country as the government only controlled the larger cities at that time.

<sup>39</sup> Undertaken by the Afghan Central Statistics Authority, Kabul, dated 23 June 1979.

<sup>40</sup> Discussions with Afghans seeking asylum in the United Kingdom revealed a very well planned and organised smuggling network, where the routes were constantly changed to avoid detection.

Land area (sq. km)	652,100
Population	25,000,000 (Source: OCHA)
Population growth rate (annual % 2000)	2.6% (Source: WB)
Population density (people per sq. km)	40.7 (Source: WB)
Urban population (% of total)	21.9 (Source: WB)
Number of refugees in Pakistan	2,000,000 (Source: UNHCR)
Number of refugees in Iran	1,500,000 (Source: UNHCR)
Numbers of internally displaced persons	1,100,000 (Source: OCHA)
Numbers killed in war	1,500,000
Mine affected areas (in sq. km)	55,000
Landmines	approx. 10 million
Life expectancy at birth (years)	40 (Source: UNDP)
Maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births)	1,700 (Source: UNICEF)
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	257 (Source: UNICEF)
Adult illiteracy rate	Overall: 64% (Source: UNDP) Women: 78.1% (Source: WB) Men: 48.1% (Source: WB)
Primary school enrolment ratio:	Girls: 3% (Source: UNICEF) Boys: 39% (Source: UNICEF)
Percentage of the Afghan population malnourished	70% (Source: UNDP)

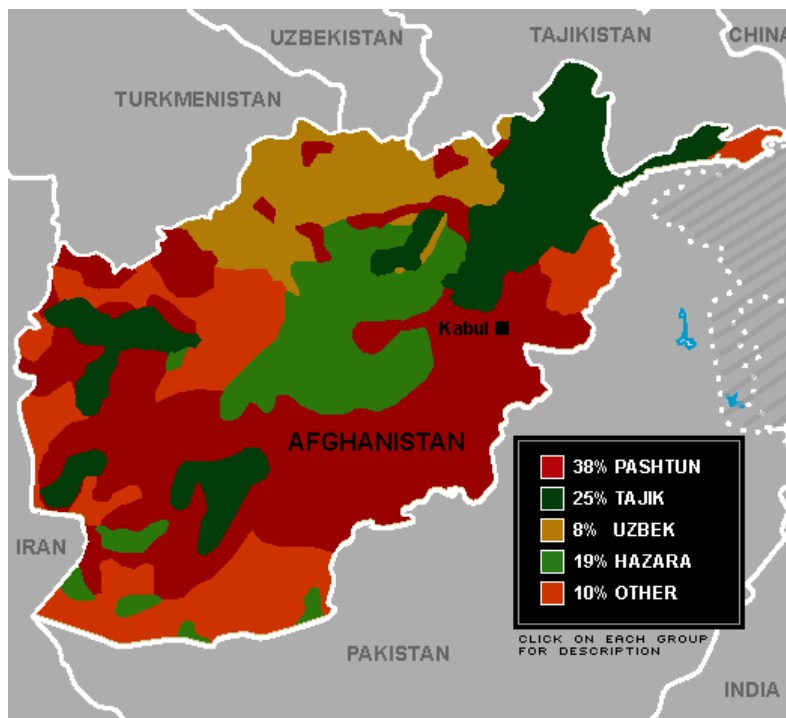
*World Bank Web-Site, October 2001*

**Box 12: Afghan Baseline Data***Source: World Bank (WB), 2001***5.1.2. Geography and People**

Afghanistan is situated in Central Asia with Pakistan, Iran, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as its neighbours. Most Afghans are followers of the *Hanafi* branch of *Sunni* Islam, although approximately 15% of the population are *Shi'a* Muslims, with a small *Isma'eli* minority and even smaller groups of *Sikh* traders and *Christian* monks and nuns.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> The *Sikhs*, trading out of the larger Afghan cities, organised much of the trade with India according to information obtained in interviews in Jalalabad in 1995, while a German brother explained to the author in May 1999 that smaller congregations of foreign monks and nuns from various countries had been engaged in ecumenical work in Afghanistan over several decades.

The *Pashtuns*, speaking *pashtu* and guided by a tribal code called *Pashtunwali*, form the single largest ethnic group in Afghanistan; they are followed by *Tajiks*, *Uzbeks*, *Hazaras* and *Turkomans*, of whom the majority speak *dari* (closely related to *farsi*, the official Iranian language), and several smaller groups with their own languages. As their name indicates, the *Tajiks*, *Uzbeks* and *Turkomans* are ethnic groups that form the majority in neighbouring countries Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and there is thus a range of contacts, though less formalised at a family level than those which emerge within *Pashtun* tribal society, while the *Hazaras*, predominantly inhabiting the central areas of Afghanistan, have forged religious, political and military ties with Iran. A map illustrating this ethnic diversity is presented below in Box 13.



**Box 13:** Map of Ethnic Make-up of Afghanistan

**Source:** CNN, 2002

Human settlements in Afghanistan are primarily rural. Pre-war estimates found 85% of the population to be living in rural villages, commonly sited on irrigated valley floors or near natural water sources, while others are nomads – *koochies* – with diverse migration patterns evolved to enable watering and feeding of their animals. 70% of the rural population were then engaged in agriculture, livestock and livestock-based handicraft production, with the main agricultural produce being wheat and fruit (apples and grapes), opium poppies, and meat and wool (CIA 2002). The war increased urban migration and also altered the traditional migration routes of the *koochies*, making them particularly vulnerable to recent drought-related ecological changes (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: Annex 1: 1).

Over recent years several large earthquakes and a drought that has lasted since 1998 have affected Afghanistan. In mid-2000 it was estimated that 3-4 million Afghans would be severely affected and another 8-12 million moderately affected by the

drought (FAO/WFP 2000) and by early 2001 as many as 700,000 were reported to be internally displaced from their place of origin (WFP 2001).

There is a considerable difference as regards the traditional division of roles between men and women, including a large variation between urban and rural areas. In the latter areas a strict physical division between the two sexes is maintained, termed *pardah*. The exception is within the immediate family, formed by birth or marriage, which is then defined as their *mahram* relationship.<sup>42</sup> As Ask explains (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2001: 24), '[T]here is a particular religious and moral order and values behind the tradition of *pardah*, which in general terms may be summarised as keeping separate the world of the two genders, alternatively as maintaining symbolic shelter for the women', and which as a result 'assign females to the private sphere and men to the public sphere'.

### 5.1.3. The Afghan Conflict and its Root Causes

The Afghan conflict has gone through a number of phases, influenced both by internal factors and by changes in the regional and international arenas, in particular the Cold War and lately the War on Terrorism. The country's historic position as a buffer state between imperial powers, attempts to obtain a neutral and non-aligned role in an unstable and shifting region, poverty and underdevelopment, and opportunities offered by Afghan and non-Afghan non-state actors owing to the weakness of the Afghan state all increased the country's vulnerability, and contributed to setting the conflict scene. The unfolding events were strongly influenced by the Great Game, the Cold War, regional transformation and conflict, and lately the War on Terror.

The starting point of the recent conflict can be traced back to 1973 when the King's cousin, Mohammed Daoud, staged a bloodless coup and appointed himself President (Arnold 1985: 57). Islamic groups opposing his rather oppressive rule fled to Pakistan, and there started to build up military organisations (Adamec 1991: 284), while in Afghanistan the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) staged the Saur revolution in 1978, assassinating Daud before introducing a communist-inspired regime. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan followed on 27 December 1979, leading to a popular uprising inside Afghanistan and massive international condemnation. A combination of Soviet and Afghan Army forces tried to control the countryside, holding a rather firm grip on the cities whereas a mujahideen movement, drawing on Western and Islamic financial and military support to counter Soviet expansion and 'world dominance' (Rais 1994: 67-73), conducted a guerrilla war from rear bases in Pakistan and Iran. The Afghan parties drew for their recruitment largely on the male refugee population, termed the 'refugee warriors' by Zolberg, Suhrke et al. (1989), and formed various short-lived coalitions until 1989 when a mujahideen-based Afghan Interim Government (AIG) was established in Pakistan. By that time the Soviet Union had already withdrawn from Afghanistan following the signing of the Geneva Accord in May 1988 (Rais 1994).

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<sup>42</sup> The opposite is *namahram*, meaning men that women are not allowed to interact with, and where they are required to be covered by a veil (or burqa) if in the same room or in the public space.

It has been estimated that in the nine years the Soviet invasion lasted, five million Afghans were forced to take refuge in Pakistan and Iran, more than one million Afghans lost their lives, an estimated 700,000 Afghans were left physically and mentally disabled and an unknown number of Afghans were left internally displaced (Sliwinsky 1989; Marsden 1999).

As the cold war ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the suffering of the Afghan population did not, however, come to an end. When the Kabul government under the leadership of President Najibullah imploded in 1992 the new Afghan Islamic Government, drawn from the various *mujahideen* parties, was not able to mitigate their internal differences and factional fighting erupted (Rais 1994:155-161). Large parts of Kabul were destroyed between 1993 and 1995, half of the city population was forced to migrate and severe human rights abuses were committed (Amnesty International 1995). The countryside was carved up between the various *commanders* and parties (Olesen 1995: 292), which competed for influence and support from their regional neighbours, particularly Pakistan and Iran but also Saudi Arabia and India and, moreover, non-state actors such as religious groups, drug traffickers, smugglers and what later were to be known as terrorist networks, including Al Qaida.

The *Taliban* (religious students) emerged out of the southern city of Kandahar in late 1994, initially drawing strong public support when addressing the lawlessness and infighting between the various parties. With Mullah Omar as head of a leadership *shura*, the movement took control of Herat in September 1995, Kabul a year later and the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998 (Rashid 2000: 227-239). They controlled approximately 85% of Afghanistan by late 2000, while an alliance of various ethnic and religious groups, termed the Northern Alliance, held the remaining 15% (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2000). The *Taliban's* strict interpretation of Islam, their violations of human rights (particularly the rights of women) and their hosting of Osama bin-Laden's network led to the international isolation of the regime. A 1998 US missile attack on *Al-Qaida* training camps increased the tension between the Taliban and the international community (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2000: 5), which continued to increase when the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on the Taliban in 1999 (UN Security Council 1999), and strengthened these further in 2000 (UN Security Council 2000). The drought did, however, generate a higher degree of displacement than the rather limited military activities that took place up to the year 2000 (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2001).

Although outside the scope of this thesis it should be mentioned that Afghanistan was again drawn out of isolation to become the main arena for the war on terror following the 11 September 2001 attack in the United States. Osama bin-Laden and his Al-Qaida network were singled out as the mastermind and organisers of the terrorist act, and the *Taliban* implicated in the crime due to their continued housing of this organisation. The Northern Alliance, backed by air campaigns and military advice from the allied forces, defeated the Taliban in November 2001. This led to a United Nations (UN) sponsored peace agreement signed in Bonn on 5 December 2001 between the 4 largest groups that constituted the opposition to the Taliban, leading to the



establishment of an Afghan Interim Administration (AIA) and a framework for a transitional process to lead Afghanistan towards a more democratically governed statehood (UN Secretary General 2001).

Despite the different stages the Afghan conflict has been through, with varying degrees of regional and international interference and influence, there are a few characteristics of the conflict that might be highlighted. Firstly, it is largely the same groups of persons that were involved in the initial stages of conflict in 1973 that still are contenders for political influence. The elite has mainly survived; the major suffering has been amongst the poorest segments of the population as they have been drafted into military service or have fled to survive.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, regional conflicts continue to influence the situation in Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup> Thirdly, all major military/political groups have been involved in human rights abuses, drug trafficking and collaboration with terrorist groups. Fourthly, ethnic and religious differences have been actively used for military mobilisation, though these seem to be less of a dividing point among the common population.<sup>45</sup> Fifthly, there have been major changes in the military and social power balance within Afghanistan as the *Pashtuns* have lost their previous unchallenged authority to other ethnic groups who have been able to use the conflict period to build up strong military units, and have thus gained larger political influence. And, finally, until the new Afghan Transitional Government was approved by summer 2002 all previous governments had been opposed by one or more groups of humanitarian organisations, either on an international solidarity base (like the communist government), or on rights-based grounds, establishing a tradition of NGO opposition to any government steering attempts and a high degree of politicised aid practice.

By the late 1990s Atmar, Barakat et al. (1998) argued that the causes of violent conflict in Afghanistan could be attributed to:

*Outside vested interests being able to utilise “conflict entrepreneurs” who are gaining and maintaining personal benefits by drawing upon available professional warriors and a large unemployed youth population. Mobilisation for fighting is increasingly done on ethnic and religious bases, partly enabled by a history of failed development.*

Reviewing this analysis in light of developments between 1998 and 2001, one might add that the conflict between the Taliban and the international community has added an element to the wider conflict, and was used for gaining military support by groups opposing the Taliban, though not to the extent that it changed the root causes of the conflict. The major trend is still that a few ‘conflict entrepreneurs’ with international and regional support have enforced their position upon the common Afghans in an attempt to gain further military/political influence or be able to exploit resources for personal gain. The end result has been increased and sustained forced migration, and an assumption that the international community and humanitarian agencies should be

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<sup>43</sup> Notable here are ex King Zahir Shah, ex President Rabbani and party leaders like Abdul Sayaff and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who all were all part of the 1973 events.

<sup>44</sup> The conflict between India and Pakistan has a major influence on the situation, but Iran has played a major role over recent years in opposing the *Taliban*.

<sup>45</sup> The common members of the Loya Jirga held in the summer of 2002 exhibited a strong will to set aside past differences and to find common ground for the peaceful development of Afghanistan.

the ones to cater for the humanitarian needs of the common Afghans, not the host state or local governance structures (for further details see appendix 2).

## 5.2. Afghan Civil Society Organisations

Before entering into a discussion on what constitutes Afghan civil society, there is a need to note that a frequently expressed opinion among NGO workers and academics alike is that there is no longer any functional Afghan civil society, a view most vividly expressed in a report from Amnesty International (1999). The main argument is that such a high number of Afghan intellectuals have left Afghanistan and the region over recent decades that a larger literate group of Afghans is absent, and that this is matched by the absence of a viable civil society. Such a view either indicates a rather narrow interpretation of what might constitute a civil society organisation, or, arguably, limited knowledge among NGO staff about existing civil structures in the country, or a possible underestimation of what organisational structures people without a higher degree of education might be able to establish and run.

The NGO community will be reviewed later in this chapter, but a few other institutions and positions representing civil society are presented below.

### 5.2.1. The Shura

The village institution the NGOs and UN agencies usually tend to cooperate with is the *shura*, which is best translated as council, and some humanitarian organisations even insisted on the existence of *shuras* as a precondition for their engagement. *Shuras* established on the request of humanitarian agencies are often less broadly representative than the traditional ones, and at times their only function is to gather in the face of aid agencies, in response to their criteria (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2001: 16). Thus a more in-depth review of the *shura*'s function is needed.

Historically, when a village or area *shura*, or *jirga*, as they are named in pashtun-dominated areas, was called it was generally to deal with a conflict or problem within the specific area. Canfield (1989: 1), moreover, points out that the *shura* might not be confined to the physical village, but 'varies a great deal, depending on the ecology and the social history of each place.'

The definition of *shura* that Carter and Connor (1989: 9) provide is: '[A] *shura* is a group of individuals which meet only in response to a specific need in order to decide how to meet the need'. Husum (1990: 15), however, provides a negative definition of a *shura*: 1) it is not just a council; 2) the *shura* assembly does not have internal political unity; 3) the *shura* does not have external political unity. And drawing on Barth's (1959, 1965) research among *Pashtuns* residing in Pakistan, he sums up: '[T]hus *shura* is not a political body, but rather a manifestation of a wide spectrum of political interaction between free men, and between free groups of men.' The latter points to the fact that traditionally only men attended the *shura* meetings.

It is interesting to note that much of the academic writing on the role of *shura* (such as Canfield, (1989), Carter and Connor, (1989), Edler (1996) and Husum (1990)) has been very critical of the role the *shura* could play towards the humanitarian agencies

as representatives of a specific village or district. Husum, in his criticism of Carter's analysis of 'the ideal *shura*' as a NGO counterpart, finds the term 'misleading, because it implies a simplification of the problem', warning that acting on simplistic analyses of the *shura* function 'may lead to the unforeseen destabilization of a local community, when coercion regarding representation results in a radical political restructuring of power relations' (1990: 21).

Such concerns have, however, not restrained the NGOs and the UN agencies from working with *shuras*, as their definition of a local body with which the aid organisation can interact at a village/district level when planning or implementing projects. This uniform adoption of the term *shura* for any local council or meeting seems to have stifled any attempt to understand the traditional mechanism the agencies interact with and, consequently, to have evaded the need to devise a strategy for how to develop such *shuras* to strengthen their capacity for governance and aid management on behalf of their local communities.

### 5.2.2. Village Structures and Positions

The normal affairs of the village, whether daily or seasonal, appeared to be cared for by a number of less formalised mechanisms and structures. This included tasks like caring for mosque property and maintaining the village road, termed *ashar*, in which the villagers acted jointly upon the need for maintenance or improvements. There was, moreover, traditionally a formal government regime of 'voluntary' work that the villagers, according to Dupree (1980: 250), tried to avoid being drafted into, unless they were forced or paid.

An important element in almost any village administration, though, is the water management system. Here the village elected a *mirau*, a person to be in command of the important, and often ancient, water distribution system.

Within the village the religious aspects of life are cared for by the village *mullah* (termed *maulawi* if holding higher religious education) and the mosque is an important gathering point for the villagers. The responsibility of the *mullah/maulawi* are not limited to religious matters; he is also responsible for the villagers' 'social and religious consciousness', as one Afghan villager termed it, through the collection and redistribution of the Islamic tax termed *zakat*.

Then comes the role of the *arbab*, known as *mir* or *malik* in other parts of Afghanistan, who according to Carter and Connor (1989: 3) are 'representatives of local communities to the government. They are in theory chosen by the consensus of the community – presumably in a "shura" – and also by the consent of the local government authorities.' This is similar to the position the *wakil-e-gozar*, the sub-district representatives, assume in the larger cities where they relate to the municipal administration (Barakat, Ehsan et al. 1996: 33). This dual role of actually representing both the village and the authorities becomes increasingly difficult when the conflict between authorities and communities heightens or the tax burden increases.

This traditional position, however, came under pressure during the Soviet occupation and the importance of this 'middleman' in the governance system inside Afghanistan

diminished. The structure was, however, maintained in the refugee camps in Pakistan as Centlivres (1993: 28) explains ‘relations with camp administration, especially when it comes to the distribution of food aid, pass through the *malek* chosen from among the ARs...’.

The importance villagers place on the *arbab/malik* function should, however, not be underestimated, not least since the Taliban apparently built the function into their governance system, reviving the traditional middleman function as an extended arm of their authority and adding to their mullah network.

### 5.2.3. Beyond the Village

If one looks beyond the village there are several further types of organisation, some now operating in exile, others active inside Afghanistan. Among these are the military/political groups that evolved from the student uprising in the 1970s and the following revolution and war, of which the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) is a prominent example (RAWA 2002). Similar political outfits have maintained a degree of political activity, although mostly in the western-based diaspora. Similarly, during the communist period a number of semi-governmental bodies such as cooperatives and workers’ councils were established (Baryalai 1984: 107), of which some still exist.

Based in Afghanistan and Pakistan one also finds a number of citizen organisations which often engage themselves in advocacy activities or peace advocacy, albeit often carefully wording their statements for fear of being targeted or assassinated by their political opponents (Suhrke, Strand et al. 2002: 21). There are, further, a number of associations, often exile-based women's groups, like those for engineers associated with the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), which offer a meeting space for women of the same profession (Strand, Lander et al. 1999: 35).

### 5.2.4. Conclusion

Recalling the definition White (1996: 180-182) provided for a civil society organisation – as voluntarily formed organisations operating in the realm between the family and the state although autonomous and separate from the state, which are formed to protect and advance the interests of members of the society – one needs to compare the above-listed Afghan organisations against this definition. Here it appears that except for the internal village administration, like the *mirau*, and the informal ‘meeting points’, the rest of the organisational structures listed above, including the *mullah/maulawi* networks, can be situated as proper civil society organisations. Not least, the *shura*, in whatever form, as long as it allows for representatives of the village to meet either to solve their internal conflicts or to represent the village vis-à-vis the authorities or humanitarian agencies, must be regarded as a genuine Afghan civil society organisation. The *arbab/wakil/malek/mir* function, when collectively elected by both the villagers and the authorities, somehow personifies the whole civil society concept as the function (in the position) that regulates the relationship between the state and the communities.

Thus it could be argued that the humanitarian agencies should have a range of Afghan civil society organisations, albeit of varying degrees of organisational representativeness and capacity, to draw on, or to develop, if they are in fact willing to engage with Afghan organisations when identifying needs and planning for and implementing humanitarian projects in Afghanistan.

### 5.3. Vulnerability Within Afghan Society

An important starting point for any humanitarian organisation, when planning for provision of humanitarian assistance, would be to assess the vulnerability of their intended beneficiaries, and to compare the vulnerability of different groups in any given location, or at a regional or national level. In the light of the theory introduced by Anderson and Woodrow (1989), who advocated the use of a capacity and vulnerability analysis, it seems pertinent to identify the perceived vulnerabilities of different groups within Afghan society as identified by different stakeholders in the Afghan recovery, and to present a review of the more general coping strategies the Afghans have developed to reduce their vulnerability and hence, need for external assistance.

#### 5.3.1. Traditional Understanding of Vulnerability

The Afghan and Islamic tradition of assisting vulnerable groups and individuals is closely linked to the religious concept of organised distribution of wealth, known as *zakat* or *saddaqa*. Among the eight groups eligible for support are the needy, the destitute, those in debt who cannot escape it and the wayfarer; the latter group could then include displaced people (Barakat and Strand 1999: 33). It should further be mentioned that in many instances it is the family unit rather than the individual person that is regarded as vulnerable and in need. This is rooted both in Islam and in Afghan tradition, as is further manifested in the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (Islamic Council 1981).

During a review of needs assessment practices among humanitarian UN agencies in Afghanistan (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001), all groups of informants were asked which groups and individuals they identified as the most vulnerable in their particular

geographical area, where the following were listed:<sup>46</sup>

Families:

- Female-headed families with a high number of young children and/or elderly people in the household.
- Families who had lost their sources of income or where the drought had disrupted their agricultural production.

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<sup>46</sup> A total of 114 structured interviews were conducted inside Afghanistan with UN and NGO staff members, both international and national, with Taliban officials at the Ministry, province and district levels and a number of Afghans, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of UN-supported relief programmes.

Individuals:

- Women heading their families.
- Unsupported children and elderly people.
- Disabled.

It should, however, be noted that as for larger groups of Afghans identified as the most vulnerable, this varied to a certain degree from area to area, reflecting the diverse situations in different parts of Afghanistan. Significant to note in all locations was the general agreement on the vulnerability of the internally displaced, whether they were forced migrants due to war or natural disaster, and also the emphasis Afghans and humanitarian agencies placed on the vulnerability of families headed by Afghan women.

This coincides with the emphasis placed by the humanitarian agencies on access to and support for Afghan women, though most frequently argued for from a rights-based approach, as in the Strategic Framework of the United Nations (UNCO 1998), and the Principled Common Programming (UNCO 1998), where terms such as ‘gender analysis’ and ‘gender mainstreaming’ are becoming household phrases among both UN agencies and NGOs. The deprivation of the right to education and employment in the aid agencies would certainly make women more vulnerable within society, although the vast majority of Afghan women have never previously been in a position to enjoy these rights and nor indeed have men.

The *maharam* edict introduced by the Taliban did specifically restrain the movement of women, at least outside their larger family sphere, and thus makes them dependent on the company of male family members if travelling outside of their local habitat. There are, however, large variations in practice between the different ethnic and religious groups, as also between geographical areas, as well as in the practice of different families (for details see the discussion of Ask in Strand, Harpviken et.al. (2001: 22-28)). Elderly women have less restriction on movement and elderly men are allowed to communicate with women. Interviews with Afghan women indicate that educated female health workers, even in *Taliban*-controlled areas, and those belonging to families with a higher social or religious standing, had fewer movement restrictions imposed by either their family or the authorities.

However, given these restrictions, and the general absence of women from village institutions as the *shura*, arguably the methodology applied by humanitarian agencies for interaction with Afghan women will be of utmost importance, as many of them have never been exposed to people outside their families. Experience has proved that focus group interviews or the use of trusted intermediaries is usually regarded as more effective than attempts to conduct direct interviews with Afghan women without a prior process for establishing trust (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 46). The emphasis, especially among UN agencies (WFP 2001), on direct access to women by their own female staff certainly limited the possibility of engaging with women, more so when the same female employees had to abide by the Taliban’s *marharam* edict.

One might thus suggest that only to a limited extent have UN agencies and NGOs been able or attempted to move beyond a general and often rights-based assessment of vulnerability among women. The possibilities that exist for interaction that is acceptable from an Afghan point of view seem not to have been fully explored as agencies have adopted more principled stands rather than exploring cultural and religiously acceptable forms of interaction.

### 5.3.2. Coping Strategies

The vulnerability of communities and individuals, male and female, must, however, be judged against the coping strategies they have developed, be it more permanent ways of coping in a prolonged emergency or more survival-oriented strategies. Here one needs to review the wide range of strategies adopted within the larger family network as much as within a particular family or for a single person.

By early 2001 a pattern had emerged of a variety of strategies adapted by the local communities to overcome the difficulties they faced due to the conflict and the recurring natural disasters, and a lack of adequate humanitarian and international assistance. Work migration to Iran and Pakistan, as well as further abroad, is most often the first choice of young men to secure cash income for their families, or, as identified by the author in villages in the Wardak Province in late 2000, to join with one of the warring factions. However, if a family cannot manage to ensure an income to sustain their lives in their home areas, the entire family might choose to migrate to Pakistan or Iran, or seek support as IDPs in camps inside Afghanistan, as the last resort of a temporary coping strategy.

To be able to pay for their migration effort or just ensure the survival of their family members, many resorted to the sale of belongings, animals and even property. Early marriage of girls was frequently reported in the northern parts of Afghanistan during early 2001, involving the handing over of responsibility for feeding and lodging a child at a very young age to their new family in-laws.<sup>47</sup>

Among the more negative forms of coping strategy are smuggling and other types of illegal activity and certainly child labour, which is frequently observed in all parts of Afghanistan.

A presentation of different coping strategies identified in Afghanistan in early 2001, and how these can be defined as either positive or negative, or both, is presented below in Table 4.

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<sup>47</sup> The UN Coordinator in Mazar-e-Sharif explained in an interview in March 2001 how such practices reportedly had increased during the winter of 2000 to 2001.

Positive	Positive and negative	Negative
Remittance	← Work migration →	Divided families, larger responsibilities for women
Social & family networks		Begging
Communal sharing		Child labour
Religiously based wealth redistribution (zakat and saddaka)		Family migration and remigration (internal and outside Afghanistan)
New business initiatives		Joining warring factions
		Concealing ethnic and/or religious background
		Environmental destruction
		Sale of belongings and property
		Criminal activities

**Table 4:** *Afghan Coping Strategies*

**Source:** *Author, 2001*

Arguably, humanitarian efforts aimed at strengthening positive coping strategies, or what can be defined as community resources mitigating the negative effects of those strategies that can be both positive and negative and aimed at reducing the need for the population to resort to strategies deemed negative by the Afghans, would help reduce vulnerability within these communities. However, even in what Afghans define as negative coping strategies, as illustrated by the larger family responsibilities that have fallen on women, this could lead to change in traditional practices, thereby both reducing vulnerability and introducing a larger role for female decision-making.

### 5.3.3. Conclusion

Discussing the degree of vulnerability in Afghan society, it seems important to note that there is a traditional Afghan understanding of vulnerability within Afghan society, as well as a rather clear opinion in both Afghan society and among humanitarian organisations as to which groups and individuals are regarded as being most vulnerable in the present Afghan context. Interestingly, the notion of what constitutes the most vulnerable groups varies between different geographical regions, thus underlining the need for thorough needs assessments before single groups are defined as vulnerable per se. The concept of positive and negative coping strategies adds insight into the resources the different communities hold, and how they are forced, due to the complex political emergency they live in, into different types of coping strategy to uphold their lives during difficult circumstances. This, again, could highlight the need for humanitarian organisations to weigh carefully the various types of humanitarian interventions aimed at assisting forced migrants, as there might be room to strengthen what can be defined as positive coping strategies, rather than forcing people into a stronger reliance on negative strategies – or aim to reduce the influence of the negative ones.



## 5.4. Afghan Governmental Structures

A starting point in the discussion on Afghan governmental structures is the recognition that Afghans, with the short-lived exceptions of electing a limited number of candidates to Parliament in 1965 and 1969 (Chishti 1998: 119), and selecting members for the national council, the *Loya Jirga*, have never been allowed to elect or take part in the direct selection of members of their government. External forces or Afghan military groups have imposed shifting forms of government on them since 1978, and prior to that their influence was limited to nomination of members for the *Loya Jirga* that pledged support to a King or a President, who then selected and presided over the government.

In contrast to most other countries in the region a colonial administrative superstructure was never erected in Afghanistan (Ghani 1990), but neither did the country develop an administration that could effectively execute new policies at the local level. Governmental tax collection, to mention one important issue, was never systematically executed. The distance between the educated elite that dominated the administrative apparatus and the common rural Afghan was enormous (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2001: 10).

### 5.4.1. Pre-war Structures

The literature contains few detailed descriptions of Afghanistan's administrative system, and much of what exists is in the form of relatively loosely founded critiques. However, the system that functioned prior to the Saur revolution in 1978 was established through the 1964 Constitution (Chishti 1998: 105). Afghanistan was then divided into 24 provinces (*wilayat*), each headed by a governor (*wali*), reporting to the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul. Furthermore, there were representatives of the various Ministries attached to the provincial administrations, reporting directly to their respective superiors in Kabul. The province was subdivided into districts (*woluswali*) with an administrator (*woluswal*) reporting to the provincial governor, and larger districts further divided into subdistricts (*alaqadari*). The smallest division was at the village or rural subdivision level, while the cities were divided into wards. At this local level, there was a middleman function, described above, called *arbab*, *malik* or *mir* in the countryside and *wakil-e-gozar* in the cities, a locally recruited person who stood between villagers and the administration (Adamec 1991:13-15).

As a consequence of the limited presence of state administration at the local level, there was a high degree of functioning self-governance, particularly in the rural areas. Local councils – *shuras* or *jirgas* – existed in most communities and the *Pashtun* tribes were largely guided by a tribal code termed *Pashtunwali*, which according to Dupree (1980: 126) provides a wide range of instructions and regulation (combined with those provided through Islam) for society.<sup>48</sup> Dupree describes *pashtunwali* as 'a tough code for tough men, who of necessity live tough lives' and

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<sup>48</sup> Among these codes are '*melmastia* (being a genial host; giving lavish parties), *mehrmahalineh* (hospitality to guests), *nanawati* (the right of asylum, and the obligatory acceptance of a truce offer), *badal* (blood revenge), *tureh* ("sword," i.e., bravery), *merahna* (manhood; chivalry), '*isteqamat* (persistence; constancy), *sabat* (steadfastness), *imandari* (righteousness), *ghayrat* (defence of property and honour), and *namus* (defence of the honour of women).

concludes that these values ‘modified by local custom, permeate in varying degree all Afghan ethnic groups (1980: 127). One influence that *pashtunwali* holds over *Pashtuns* relates to support of forced migrants, since it instructs all *Pashtuns* to provide asylum and offer protection and hospitality to fellow *Pashtuns* fleeing persecution and war. The tribal and religious identity shared between Afghan *Pashtuns* (who formed the majority of Afghans fleeing to Pakistan) and Pakistani tribal *Pashtuns*, provided both protection and support for those forced to flee from Afghanistan, and a *pashtunwali*-guided society to live in.

#### 5.4.2. The PDPA and Mujahideen Governments

During the reign of the PDPA government (1978-1992), their administration functioned only in the cities and in very restricted areas, while in the rural areas the various *mujahideen* groups established their military organisations and some also established a rudimentary civilian administration.<sup>49</sup> In some areas, where *mujahideen* groups gained control over larger centres from the early 1990s onwards, like in Herat and Jalalabad, they assimilated bureaucrats from the existing ‘communist’ government administration into their administrative structure. The NGOs continued to work with their commander networks, as the political rhetoric of an anti-communist struggle was maintained, although a number of agencies started to look for other ways of organising their assistance and to work with more community-based structures; hence the *shuras* became an attractive choice rather than engaging with emerging governmental structures (Strand and Harpviken 2001).

Following the 1992 fall of the PDPA-established government the Afghan state administration fell into the hands of a *mujahideen*-led government. While a substantial portion of the administrative staff remained in lower positions, the administrative system as such was carved up between the groups, without any unifying governance system (Strand and Harpviken 2001: 12). NGOs entered into a stage of ‘submissive neutrality’, as they knew that they depended on their contacts within the various *mujahideen* groups to negotiate transport permits and obtain visas, thus entering into more of a business relationship with the government employees. Likewise, in the countryside agencies continued paying ‘road taxes’ to the *mujahideen* groups to get their supplies through.

#### 5.4.3. The Taliban Period

When the Taliban gained control in Kandahar in 1994 their aim was gradually to re-establish the pre-war administrative system, though with a wish to develop this system further and adapt it to the present situation in the country.<sup>50</sup> Among the most significant modifications of the administrative system was the introduction of *shuras* at the district and provincial levels, the importance accorded to the village *shura*, and

<sup>49</sup> Notable examples here are the Shure-e-Ittefaq that established a de facto government in Hazarasjat in the early 1980s, see Poladi, H. (1989). *The Hazaras*. Stockton, California, Mughal Publishing Co., and the Shura-e-Nezar established in the Pansjir valley by late 1980s, both of these in ethnically monolithic areas and combining a military organisation with a degree of civilian structure.

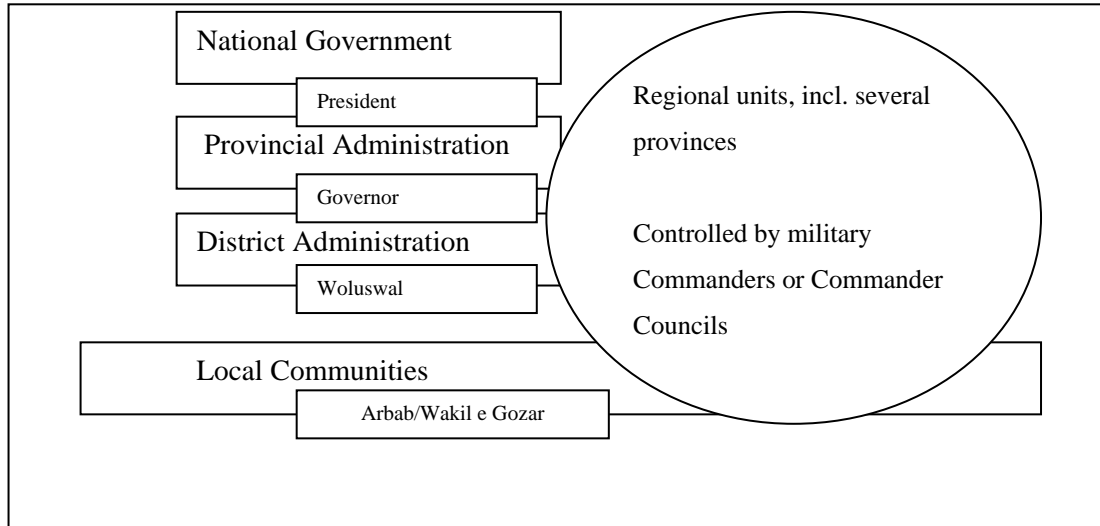
<sup>50</sup> This strategy was outlined by the Taliban envoy to the United Nations, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, in a discussion with researcher Kristian Berg Harpviken (private communication, 2000).

the establishment of a relatively independent ‘control ministry’ – the Ministry of Vice and Virtue. These bodies, combined with a reliance on the flow of information through existing religious networks, gave the *Taliban* an unprecedented level of control down to the local level, including for tax collection and recruitment to their military forces.

What this meant was that after 1997 the *Taliban* managed to establish a governmental system that extended control further into the countryside than any previous administrations had apparently done. Consequently, the *Taliban* expected NGOs and the UN to respect their authority and to consult on matters the *Taliban* deemed important for Afghanistan and the local communities. In addition, a religious motivation existed for the establishment of a new Islamic system with a greater focus on Afghan and Islamic tradition. Many studies published on the *Taliban* have, however, attempted to analyse these aspects of the movement only to a very limited degree, tending to narrow the scope of research to military strategies, links with religious and military groups in Pakistan and *Pashtunism* (Maley 1998; Marsden 1998).

#### **5.4.4. Conclusion**

Concluding on the history of the Afghan governance system, we see that it has never been particularly efficient. Until 1996 the entire governance structure of Afghanistan was managed and run by a small educated urban elite. The ability to implement policies and run affairs at the local level has always been wanting. In the words of Thomas Barfield, ‘[N]ational politics and programs were largely divorced from rural areas.’ The administrative capacity further deteriorated through the period of communist rule (1978-1992) and the ensuing period of intra-*mujahideen* fighting (1992-1996). Below in Box 14 is a presentation of the traditional politico-administrative system versus what was established through the *mujahideen* period.



**Box 14:** *Political-administrative Organisations in Afghanistan*

**Source:** Author 2002

Afghan citizens, however, have not been allowed any influence on the selection or election of an Afghan government, and thus they have limited influence on the formation and development of the Afghan state function. Thus the notion of a functional and democratic state, such as is often the theoretical case in civil society models, must be rejected and a more subtle picture of both the state and government functions established, including here their interaction with civil society organisations and the business community.

While there is a notable Afghan business community, as the third element within civil society theory, it is difficult to set Afghan market forces totally apart from any given military or politically dominated state authority, and thus it has become as remote from any possible influence by an Afghan civil society as any government has been. The standard relationship between business community and state and civil society, based on competition and an open market, is largely absent in Afghanistan, and thus the complexity of business channels and arrangements is more difficult to comprehend and analyse, leaving the humanitarian agencies with reduced possibilities to measure the impact, positive or negative, of their interventions on the financial markets and the daily lives of the Afghan people (for a more detailed review of the Afghan market sector and how it has been influenced by the conflict, see appendix 3).

What anyhow can be summarised is that over recent decades the Afghan state has had limited possibilities and demonstrated almost no willingness to support its own citizens; and that responsibility has been left by successive regimes for the NGOs and the UN agencies to cater for.

## 5.5. Forced Migration in Afghanistan

There is no doubt that Afghanistan constitutes one of the largest and most long-lasting cases of forced migration in the world, starting massively in 1979 and still by end of 2001 amounting to more than 3.8 million Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries and about 1.2 million IDPs inside Afghanistan (UNHCR 2002). Moreover, the case of the Afghan refugees constituted, as Centlivres (1993: 13) correctly pointed out, ‘the largest population of the same origin transplanted outside its borders, in an exodus of poor people taking refuge among the poor,’ of whom in 1979 approximately 85 per cent were rural inhabitants (1993: 6).

### 5.5.1. Four Factors Influencing Migration Patterns and Practice

When Afghan migration history and patterns are looked into, it is important to discuss four factors that have influenced movements of people in addition to those imposed by armed conflicts, namely the ethnic, religious, economic and gender dimensions.

#### *The Ethnic Dimension*

As previously described Afghanistan is composed of a mix of ethnic groups, most of which are represented in one of the neighbouring countries. The *Pashtuns*, the world’s largest tribal society and Afghanistan’s largest ethnic group, reside in northern Pakistan and southern and eastern Afghanistan, while *Tadjiks*, *Uzbeks* and *Turkmans* are related to inhabitants of republics bearing the same ethnic names that emerged from the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Dupree 1980). Thus the presence of a tribal code of honour, a common history and, for many, a shared language or religion has eased the interaction between Afghans and neighbouring states and inhabitants, thus more easily accommodating cross-border migration.

#### *The Religious Dimension*

As previously discussed, in Islam there is a tradition and an obligation, dating back to the prophet Mohammed’s flight from Mecca to Medina in 622, of fleeing their country or home when being invaded or persecuted by a non-Islamic force. This Muslim refugee is termed a *muhajir* and the religiously motivated flight a *hijrah* (Shahrani 1995: 196). The *muhajir* is not compelled to cross any international border to be considered a ‘Muslim refugee’, and consequently the term covers both international accepted definitions of refugee and Internally Displaced Person (IDP). In Afghanistan this religiously motivated migration pattern coincided largely with a tribal code (regarded by many *Pashtuns* as a religious obligation) that ensured that the migrants were provided with shelter and protection by their fellow tribesmen.

### *The Economic Dimension*

Afghanistan is, and has been, one of the world's poorest countries, or as Rubin (2002: 153) summarises, 'Afghanistan ranks near the bottom of the human family.' This has forced Afghan men (women only when they moved together with their man or their family) to move from their habitats to seek work opportunities, both seasonal and on a longer-term basis, or engage in different types of trading activity. This high degree of poverty has brought many Afghans to job sites in neighbouring countries, or in the Middle East, though many first tried to find jobs within Afghanistan, for example, the seasonal work of maintaining the ancient *kareez* irrigation system, and the high number of *Hazaras* seeking employment in Kabul and abroad. According to Poladi (1989: 347), by the mid-1980s one-fourth of the adult population of eastern Hazarasjat worked outside the region during the winter. Centlivres (1993: 17) estimates the number of Afghan work migrants in Iran to have been between a half and one million prior to 1979, and while this included people from different parts of Afghanistan it certainly established a pattern for work migration that was later upheld, though often through illegal trespassing of borders.<sup>51</sup> Another group that needs to be included here is the nomads, the *koochies*, estimated to be about 600,000 (Centlivres 1993: 7) although no reliable figures are available, who belong to different *Pashtun* tribes and travel with their herds within Afghanistan or between Pakistan and Afghanistan on a seasonal basis.

### *The Gender Dimension*

There is, as mentioned, in general a strict segregation of sexes in Afghanistan, based both on practice and on a conservative interpretation of Islam and, not least, upon their traditional way of organising their livelihoods. However, there has been a very strong difference in how this has been applied between the cities, especially Kabul, and the countryside. While many women living in the major cities did not wear the veil, were educated and had jobs in the public domain, their rural sisters, especially in *Pashtun* areas, often wore the full covering burqa and were confined to the family compound where only their men and sons were allowed to see their faces. Though there is a certain class dimension to this segregation, as in the poorer families the women had to work the land as well to ensure the family income, and then seclusion was not feasible.

Consequently it was the men that ventured from their home livelihood to seek jobs, or, as was the case for the 'refugee warriors' to wage *jihad* (holy war) inside Afghanistan. During the 1990s and until the fall of the Taliban regime the refugee camps were used as a recruiting and training ground for first the *mujahideen* parties, and later on the Taliban. Both the work migration and *jihad* trend is clearly illustrated by the figures for gender distribution among refugees in Iran and Pakistan. Whereas in Iran there was a large majority of adult men among the refugees, exceeding 60 %, the number of men residing in Pakistan was down to 25 % (Centlivres 1993:14-17). However, in most families staying in refugee camps there

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<sup>51</sup> Interviews undertaken in Hazarasjat during 1996 revealed that single men relied on the smuggling network to get themselves to worksites in the larger Iranian cities, while families frequently tried to bribe their way across the border, arguing that they would go to Iran to pray at the grave of Imam Khomeini.

would still be one man left to assume the role of ‘the man of the house’, though this responsibility could also be put on the eldest son of the family even if he was not yet a teenager. Nevertheless, as Centlivres points out about the refugee camps in Pakistan, ‘the camp functions as a adobe for women, old people and young children’, and that ‘[S]trict observation of *purdah* (gender segregation, author’s comment) is linked to this situation’. This leaves Centlivres to conclude, ‘[S]ocially and psychologically, it is the women who have suffered most from exile’ (1993: 24-25).

### 5.5.2. Historic Migration Trends

Given the long conflict history and the difficulties in sustaining livelihoods in a country with such weak development progress and major natural constraints and hazards, many Afghans have naturally had to flee or leave to sustain their lives.

When Afghan migration is placed in a historical perspective the first major outflow of migrants from Afghanistan in recent history took place in the early 1890s, as the Afghan King Abdur Rahman forced the ethnic and religious minority, the *Hazaras*, under his rule (Poladi 1989: 257), and resettled opposing *Pashtuns* in the north. While a large number *Hazaras* fled to then British India, many were brought to Kabul to serve as slaves, a practice continuing until the mid-1930s (Poliadi 1989: 360). The expansion of the Soviet Union in the 1930s created at that time an influx and settlement of *Uzbek*, *Turkmen* and *Tadjik muhajirin* in northern Afghanistan (Shahrani 1995: 194), laying the foundation for a strong regional intra-ethnic identity across the Afghan border.

During the 1960s and 1970s work migration to Iran increased, due to limited work opportunities inside Afghanistan and according to Rubin (1996) the workforce at that time was estimated to include about 600,000 Afghans. A more politically motivated migration also took place in the mid-1970s as a number of Islamist-oriented students and teachers at the Kabul University fled to Pakistan following mass arrests, from where they waged a guerrilla war into Afghanistan (see Anwar (1988) for a critical review of this period).

The Saur Revolution of 27 April 1978 triggered the first major politically forced migration exodus, not least as people in the countryside started to revolt against the ill-received reforms that were introduced (Anwar 1988: 141-150). Figures provided by Centlivre (1993: 13) illustrate these trends, as he put the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan during the period 1973-78 at about 1,500, with an increase to 109,000 in April 1978 and then to 190,000 in October 1979.

The major exodus, however, came only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 27 December 1979; in the following years an estimated 3.2 million Afghans fled to Pakistan and 2.3 million to Iran (Christensen 1995: 105). Shahrani (1995: 193) states that over 97 % of the refugees fleeing to Pakistan were from rural agricultural and pastoral nomadic backgrounds, while Sliwinsky (1989: 46) found that 85% of these were *Pashtuns*.

Moreover, some Afghans left Pakistan and Iran for Europe, USA, Canada or Australia. Notable amongst them were highly educated Afghans that either did not

want to be aligned with the political groups or were attracted by more interesting jobs outside the region; and those who sought political asylum, because they opposed the political and military ideology of the Pakistani-backed Afghan political parties.

Within Afghanistan another major movement of people took place during the same period, though less studied and documented than what occurred in Pakistan, with people shifting from rural areas towards the larger cities. Though figures from this period are not independently verified, Rubin (1996: 1) suggest that the number of people residing in Kabul grew from about 600,000 to over 2 million through the 1980s.

A spontaneous repatriation to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran occurred immediately after the mujahideen parties took control of Kabul in 1992, with 1.56 million refugees returning within a short time span. At the same time the urban elite, many affiliated with the PDPA or who had been governmental employees, left Afghanistan. During the years 1991–93 as many as 80,000 Kabulis were registered upon entering Pakistan, and a large number reportedly also left for India, the former Soviet republics or to the West.<sup>52</sup> A major battle in Kabul, commencing on 1 January 1994, led to internal displacement and a new outflow of people from the city.<sup>53</sup>

As the Pakistani Government closed its border with Afghanistan the migrants were confined inside Afghanistan, with as many as 300,000 migrants residing for almost a year in tent camps outside Jalalabad. A number of migrants tried to reach to Iran, but facing problems with crossing the Iranian border they opted for a temporary settlement in Herat city while many sought temporary shelter in areas close to Kabul (NCA 1994).

While these internal movements took place in Afghanistan, Tadjik forced migrants, reaching a total of 60,000 in 1993, actually entered northern Afghanistan from 1991 (Rubin 1996). The majority settled in camps along the border, although some moved on to Kabul or towards Iran. The majority, however, returned to Tajikistan through a UN assistance programme, which was completed by June 1997.

These events coincided with the expulsion of Afghans from Iran from 1994 onwards, formalised through a tri-party repatriation programme established between the UNHCR and the Afghan and Iranian Governments, in which the returnees were provided with a limited support package, transported across the border and given mine-awareness training.<sup>54</sup> This programme was terminated when the Taliban captured western Afghanistan in September 1995, and was according to UNHCR officials in Herat (personal communication, 2001) only reinitiated in the spring of 1999.

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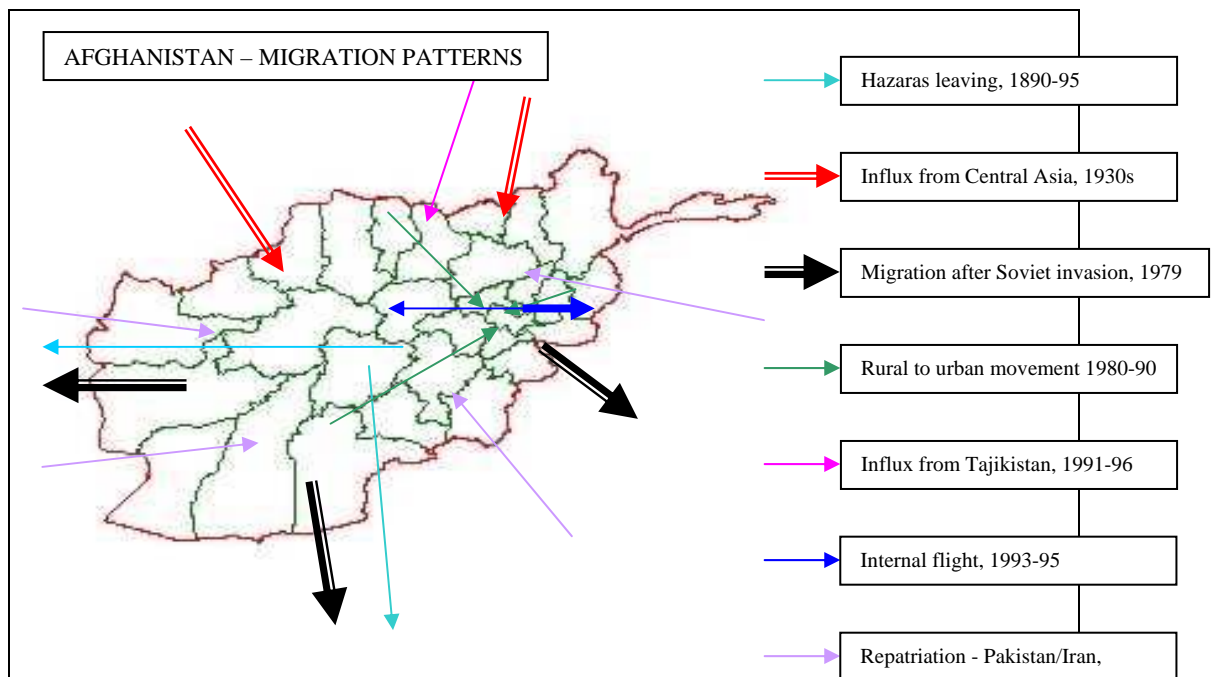
<sup>52</sup> The author has met relatives of several high-ranking Afghan PDPA members who left for India or the Soviet Union during 1989 and 1991.

<sup>53</sup> During the period January 1994 to mid-1995 the United Nations estimated that half of the Kabul population of 1.5 million were either internally displaced within the city, or moving back and forth to areas least affected by the war.

<sup>54</sup> The author interviewed representatives from the Iranian Foreign and Interior Ministries as well as the Afghan Ambassador and UNHCR officials in Teheran and Mashad in 1994.



The Taliban takeover of Kabul in September 1996 forced those affiliated to the Rabbani government to leave for northern Afghanistan and the Pansjir valley. The battlefronts, like those in Bamiyan city, have since been areas where repeated rounds of fighting have forced the population to leave, or the Shomali plain where the Taliban in August 1999 purposely drove 200,000 inhabitants out of the area to eradicate any hiding places for their opposition (Rashid 2000: 234). The drawing below in Box 15 illustrates the different migration movements and patterns in Afghanistan between 1890 and 1995.



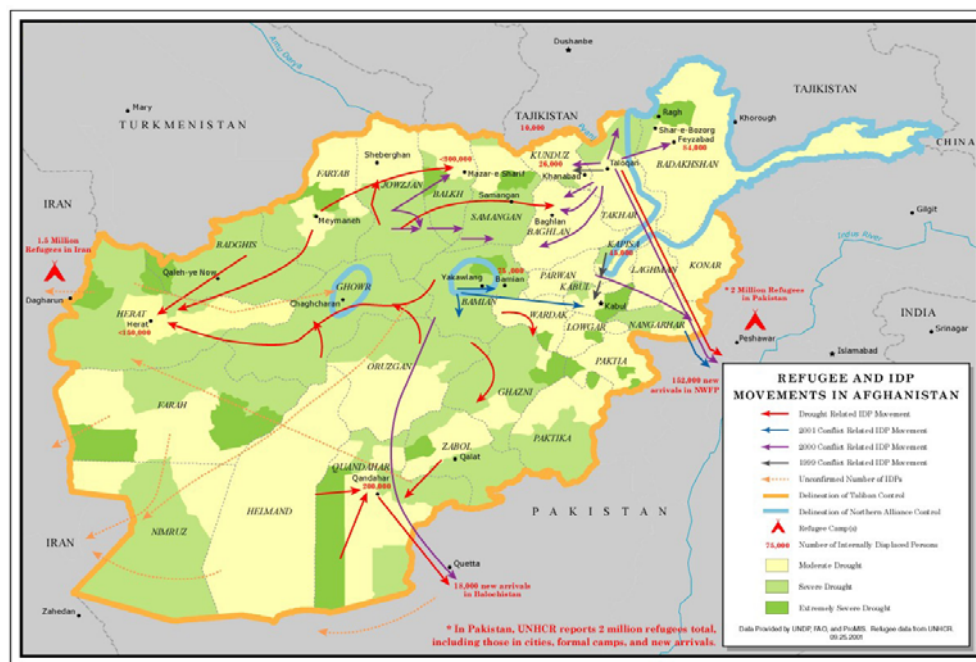
**Box 15:** *Migration Patterns in Afghanistan*

**Source:** *Author, 1999*

Since 1999 a severe drought has also hit central, southern and northern parts of Afghanistan, forcing a high number of people to flee their homes as agricultural income was no longer sufficient to sustain their lives. A majority of the approximately 350,000 residing in camps in the Herat and Kandahar area in early 2000 had fled due to the drought, not because of any present armed conflict, although past ones had increased the vulnerability of the population.

### 5.5.3. Migration Status as of Late 2001

Many of the Afghan refugees now residing in Pakistan have been there for more than 20 years. Many of these have established new livelihoods in exile and new generations of Afghans have grown up there largely influenced by the habits and culture of these countries. There are also increasing estimates of the internally displaced within Afghanistan, tallying 1.2 million by the end of 2001 (UNHCR 2002), with a majority of these displaced since spring 2000, primarily due to drought and secondly to localised and seasonal military activities (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2001: 8). Below in Box 16 is a presentation of migration movements by 2001.



**Box 16:** Refugee and IDP Movements in 2001

*Source:* ProMIS, 2001

Meanwhile, organisations like the ICRC stopped providing assistance to IDPs in Herat in 2001 as their displacement was not deemed to be war-related (personal communication, Herat, 2001). The forced repatriation of both refugees and work migrants is reportedly continuing from Iran with Pakistan planning to follow suit, although a steady but small voluntary repatriation is ongoing with a total of 26,092 Afghans returning home in 2001 (UNHCR 2002). The difficult living conditions Afghans observe in these countries, and the generally negative prospect of peace that prevailed until the end of 2001, led many Afghans to seek refuge in countries outside the region (for further details on Afghan migration see appendix 4).

#### 5.5.4. Conclusion

The Afghan case illustrates how difficult it might be to draw definitive lines between voluntary and forced migration, and that there might be multiple causes for people and groups of people choosing to migrate, temporarily or on a more permanent basis. Furthermore, it shows how difficult it is to differentiate between migration caused by war activities, where forced migrants are entitled to assistance in accordance with the Geneva Convention, and displacement caused by natural disasters, when even these might be caused or increased by the military activities, but the forced migrants in these cases hold no legal right to humanitarian assistance. When in addition neighbouring states to Afghanistan close their borders, forced migrants are even denied their rights according to the refugee convention to seek refuge from either war or natural disasters in their home countries. Such policies have forced large groups of Afghans into internal displacement, leaving the legal responsibility for this population to a government that was unrecognised by the international community, or to local warlords, neither of which wished or were able to provide the forced

migrants with the necessary assistance for sustaining their lives. This, in effect, placed that responsibility upon the international community and the will and ability of humanitarian organisations to respond to their needs and raise funds for such programmes from the world community.

In sum, it can be established that there has been, and continues to be, a very high degree of forced migration in Afghanistan, including both refugees and IDPs, who have fled for a wide range of reasons. Combined with a high degree of voluntary and forced repatriation, the Afghan case should prove very suitable for a review of the role the non-governmental organisations have played, singly and in a coordinated manner, in supporting this diverse group of forced migrants in different phases of their flight, return and resettlement.

## 5.6. Conclusion

As pointed out above, internal political, ethnic and religious differences, and international interference, have contributed to the complexity of the Afghan conflict. Such factors have been used throughout the conflict for war mobilisation and have provided justification for suppression and violations of rights. When comparing the situation in Afghanistan with the characteristics suggested by Hallam (1998) for what constitutes a complex political emergency, by the year 2000 the country fulfilled eight out of the nine requirements. The last requirement, a collapse of state function, is disputed.

In addition to the ongoing military and political conflict, causing a high degree of forced migration, the country is extremely prone to a wide range of natural disasters, in which vulnerability is exacerbated by the political instability within the country. Thus, in conclusion, by early 2001 Afghanistan could clearly be defined as a complex political emergency both from a theoretical viewpoint and from the fact that it has been defined as one by the United Nations and frequently referred to as one by the NGOs. However, rather than defining Afghanistan as a failed state it might be more useful to use Duffield, Gossman et. al's (2001) definition of Afghanistan as an 'emerging political complex' for analysing the situation in the country by mid-2001.

An attempt has furthermore been made to draw on civil society theory to document how the different elements of such a society, being the state, the business community and civil society, are organised and how their roles and interaction have changed throughout and due to the armed conflict that has been ongoing in Afghanistan since 1978. It is argued that there is a much wider Afghan civil society than is frequently recognised by international organisations, although the different civil society groups have exercised little influence over political developments in Afghanistan due to the militarisation of society and the development of a black and unregulated economy.

It is suggested that Afghan society has a very clear understanding of vulnerability and which are the groups that are more in need of assistance than others. Likewise, by reviewing the coping strategies developed by the Afghans throughout the conflict, and using their categorising of these as either positive and negative (or both), it is argued that humanitarian agencies are left with a range of choices for strengthening the positive coping strategies or attempting to mitigate the negative ones.

A typical result of the conflict in Afghanistan has been the very high degree of forced migration, both in the form of a long-staying refugee population in Pakistan and Iran and of large groups of internally displaced people due to war and the drought that has afflicted the country since 1999. It is, however, noted that the lines between voluntary and forced migration are blurred where a long history of poverty-initiated work migration has laid the foundation for later migration patterns. A further range of Afghan-specific modalities, such as ethnicity, religious practice and gender roles, have also influenced migration practice.

## **6. NGOs and NGO Coordination in Afghanistan**

This Chapter will start with a presentation of the NGO community established in Pakistan from 1979 onwards and which later conducted cross border operations into Afghanistan before setting up larger projects and a more permanent representation there. A distinction is here made between Afghan, International Islamic and Western NGOs. This is then followed by a review of the five Afghan specific NGO coordination bodies. Their mandates, membership base and activities are reviewed, as is their attitude towards each other, shifting Afghan governments and opposition groups, the UN, the donors and their intended beneficiaries.

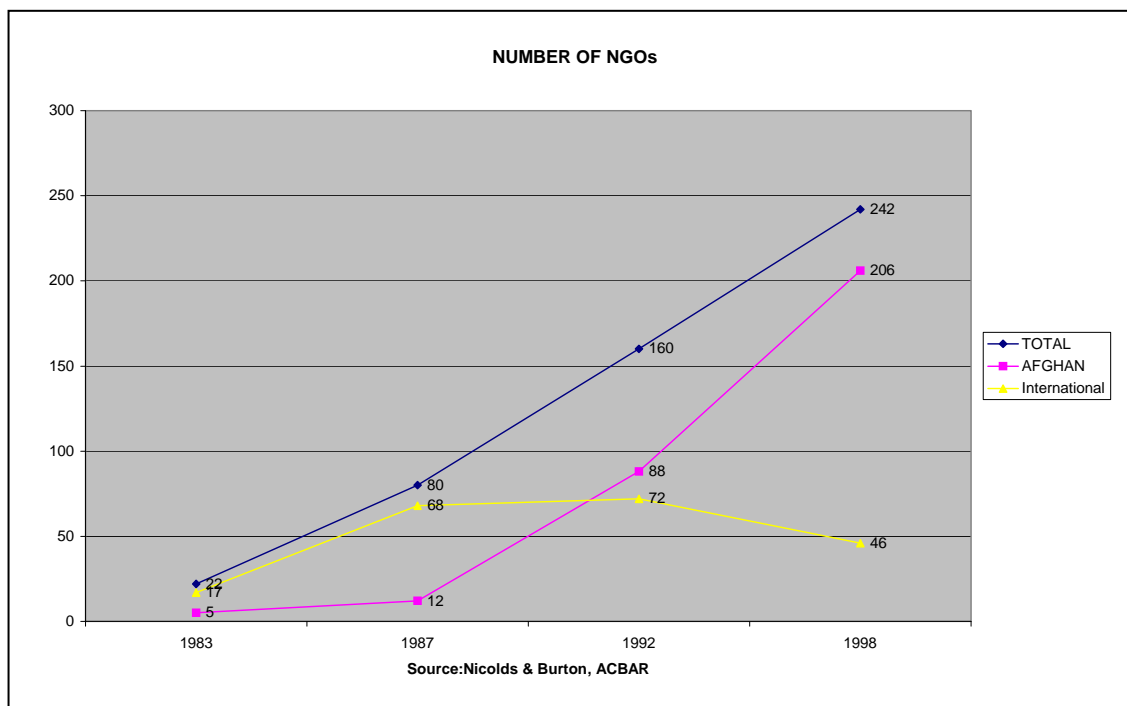
An introduction is furthermore provided to the UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, which was a test case for a UN coordination arrangements in complex political emergencies, and the Principled Common Programming process that aimed at included both the UN, NGOs and the donors in a wider coordination arrangement.

Finally a discussion is drawn up on the extent these coordinating bodies have been able to respond to the needs of forced migrants, followed by a conclusions on the extent and limitation of NGO collaboration and coordination in Afghanistan.

### **6.1. The NGO Community**

The NGO community that has provided humanitarian assistance for Afghan forced migrants and returnees since 1979 is a very mixed group, amongst which many NGOs were specifically established in support of Afghans with a distinct solidarity orientation, and where a large number of agencies have been engaged since the early 1980s (for details on the NGO history see appendix 5).

No exact figure exists for the number of NGOs operating in Afghanistan or Pakistan, but estimates made by the coordinating bodies put the number in the range of 300 to 400 (ACBAR 1999). There were by mid-1999 252 agencies registered as members of coordinating bodies, and of these, 206 were national NGOs and 46 international NGOs, the latter being based in a Western or Islamic country. Box 17 below illustrate how rapidly the number of Afghan NGOs increased after 1988.



**Box 17:** Number of NGOs 1983–1998<sup>55</sup>

**Source:** Nicholds and Burton (1994) and ACBAR (1999)

If the NGOs operating in Afghanistan are categorized according to nationality and internationality, three major groups appear, listed below alphabetically, being Afghan NGOs, international Islamic NGOs and Western-based NGOs. Here these three groups are briefly presented, leading into a comparison and a discussion on their relations with and assistance to forced migrants.

### 6.1.1. Afghan NGOs

An Afghan NGO (ANGO) is here defined as an NGO established by Afghans and working in Afghanistan or with Afghan refugees in Pakistan and/or Iran, and typical of the group is that most of their funding was derived from UN agencies or international donors (ACBAR 1998). From their presentations one can establish that some of these NGOs have a general mandate for integrated rehabilitation/development programmes, while a large number of ANGOS have adopted a flexible approach in order to tailor programmes and projects to the availability of funds.

Of this group, 206 were by spring 1999 registered as members of coordinating bodies. Judged on the basis of funds and staffing levels, this group includes some of the largest NGOs working in Afghanistan, for example, those agencies specialised in Mine Action operations and a limited number of more development-oriented NGOs. Based on information on 97 of a total of 206 Afghan NGOs registered as members of coordinating bodies (ACBAR 1999), with only 18 listed as non-members, it appears

<sup>55</sup> This included NGO registered with a coordinating body after 1987.

that NGOs in this group had a 1998 budget of US\$ 34,987,895, or an average, for those providing information, of US \$ 364,000. This translates into approximately 28% of the total NGO budget, although as many as 34 NGOs in this group had a 1998 budget below US\$ 50,000.

### *Type of NGO*

There is a diversity of Afghan NGOs, although they do share a similar characteristic in that they are all recent constructions in a country with a very limited pre-war experience of NGOs. Using Korten's definition, some of these NGOs may be termed voluntary organisations, although they seem to have a rather low degree of voluntary participation, both on the part of staff and on the part of the local communities they are supposed to assist. The notion of grassroots or community-based organisations is not apparent, although more development-oriented Afghan NGOs show increasing concern and ability to use a participatory approach, and make use of participatory tools, in their work. When judging this group, it should be borne in mind that:

- Many Afghan NGOs were established upon the request, direction and special interests of donors.
- Most of these organisations were modelled on the practices and appearance of international NGOs, including the prerequisites of a large office, high salaries for directors and senior management, as well as fringe benefits, such as 4x4s, international travel, mobile phones and attending numerous receptions.

Thus, as many NGOs were invited to become contractors and implementers for UN agencies and some international donors (Bennett 1995; Nicholds and Borton 1994), it is understandable that their awareness of what it means to be an NGO might be rather slight.

### *Analysis of NGO Group*

A major challenge expressed by some directors of Afghan NGOs, regarding themselves as an integral part of an Afghan civil society, is that they are judged and funded on the basis of a general negative assumption informed by views taken towards the more business-oriented Afghan NGOs. This, again, limits their ability to develop into more civil society-based organisations, as they have to rush from contract to contract and have limited possibilities to stay on in one area, undertake a more comprehensive needs assessment, and thus provide a wider range of humanitarian assistance to the affected population. There are, however, exceptions here, especially among the five largest NGOs, who, with more stable and longer-term donor commitment, have established themselves more permanently in several geographical areas and even undertaken joint surveys and needs assessments.

Some Afghan NGOs have provided extensive training for their staff and developed long-term visions for their work, and their staffs appear both committed and well qualified. Afghan NGOs involved in Mine Action programmes, for example, are rated as some of the best in the world, with the Afghan demining operation being

considered as the most successful demining operation worldwide (Harpviken, Millard et al. 2001: 46-47).

The majority of Afghan NGOs are, however, struggling to survive on assistance provided through the UN system. When the common Afghan did not see much tangible benefit from their activities, as these were frequently marred by poor quality as they tried to save on their implementation costs, the local communities were further alienated, and their trust in the 'NGOs' sharply decreased.<sup>56</sup>

This, in the end, leads into a discussion on how many of the more than 206 registered Afghan NGOs that really can be termed NGOs, if an international understanding of the term should be applied. The answer is probably less than 50 if their adherence to organisational bylaws, organisational management, planning and accounting practise is taken into account. A very large number of Afghan NGOs should rather be labelled as 'personal owned NGOs', governed by a family or a small group of friends.<sup>57</sup> Which certainly is a problem for establishing trust towards external donors, but also a major hindrance for further development of these organisations.

### *Relations with Forced Migrants*

As for targeting forced migrants there are no Afghan NGOs found specialising in this field; however, the majority of Afghan NGOs would naturally target forced migrants through their involvement in emergency relief operations, albeit less as a clear priority and more due to the funding prospect that is identified in this sector. Most staff members working at the headquarter level of Afghan NGOs operating from Pakistan will themselves be forced migrants, and then presumably be in a position to understand the situation of fellow Afghan refugees.

Important to mention here is that the only pure human rights NGO permanently operating inside Afghanistan is an Afghan one, the Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA) (2002), and they have focused on the situation for IDPs inside Afghanistan as well as rights abuses against Afghans residing in Pakistan and Iran. However, few other Afghan NGOs have taken an explicit stand to aid or provide protection or advocacy for Afghan refugees or internally displaced people. The large majority of Afghan NGOs have opted for an approach where the income of the NGO (and the key staff) is in focus, rather than specialising in certain fields.

### **6.1.2. International Islamic NGOs**

An International Islamic NGO (INGO) is defined here as an NGO having either its headquarters in an Islamic country and/or drawing support and funds from Islamic societies like the UK-based Muslim Aid. Some of these NGOs operate in many countries, while others have been established for the sole purpose of supporting

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<sup>56</sup> An explanation provided by an ANGO director in Herat, having argued with the local population when they complained about the quality of the work, was according to several sources (personal communication, Herat, 1999) that 'One third of the money I receive is for the road, one third is for me for organising this work and one third is for the UN official who signed my contract.'

<sup>57</sup> A label used by the Norwegian Church Aid in 2003 in a review of the Afghan NGOs they funded.



Afghans. Several of these NGOs operate according to general mandates and some specialise in a particular field, for example, orphanages. Among the groups reviewed, the Islamic NGOs has been the most difficult ones to obtain data on, as little is documented in English on their activities.

There were by spring 1999 eleven INGOs registered with the Islamic Coordination Council, two of which also held ACBAR membership. Some INGOs control enough funds to rank them among the largest NGOs, while the rest tend to be ranked nearer the middle (ACBAR 1998). In recent years, funding for INGOs has been reduced according to the Islamic Coordination Council (ICC), mainly as a result of cutbacks in their home countries as the support for the Afghan cause has vanished due to the prolonged civil war. Several INGOs, however, have reported that their activities inside Afghanistan have increased and that they had been able to secure funding from new donors, like the UN agencies. Based on information on six of eleven ICC members (ACBAR 1999), it appears that in 1998 these NGOs had a total budget of US\$ 9,664,900, or an average of US \$ 1.6 million. This translates into approximately 7.6% of the total NGO budget.

### *Type of NGO*

The International Islamic NGOs, with the exception of the Saudi Red Crescent Society, which is better defined as an intergovernmental organisation, may be defined as voluntary organisations with funding largely derived from private sources. For some years, the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO 1998) and the Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA) have operated as large international NGOs, with projects in many countries. The World Association of Muslim Youth (WAMY 2002), formerly the Lajnat al Birr Al-Islamia, is also represented worldwide. These organisations draw support mainly from their home constitutions, where a substantial amount of funding comes from *zakat* and *saddaqa*. The Kuwait Red Crescent (KJRC) and ISRA receive between 20 to 30 % of their funds from the UN, while the other NGOs receive only small amounts from UN sources. There is, therefore, hardly any competition for funds between International Islamic NGOs and the other groups, as it appears that only limited amounts of funding from Islamic NGOs are channelled through Afghan NGOs and the UN funding is still marginal.<sup>58</sup>

### *Analysis of NGO Group*

From the point of view of funding, the International Islamic NGOs are relatively independent, since their private Islamic sources remain rather consistent. Funds derived from *zakat*, however, bring with them clear directions on how such funds should be used, and support for orphans, widows and religious education is most frequently listed. That would, then, specifically target forced migrants although more within a limited relief perspective than adopting a wider and longer-term rehabilitation strategy.

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<sup>58</sup> There are some examples of Afghan NGOs receiving support from Islamic groups, like Muslim Aid in the UK, though the actual amounts or value of commodities seems low.

The International Islamic NGOs have a more recent history than many Western NGOs, although some NGOs established themselves early in Afghanistan, where their history extends further back than the Afghan national NGOs. International Islamic NGOs have mainly been involved in emergency relief although some have experience of rehabilitation and education work, and not least health projects and the running of orphanages. ISRA and WAMY implement minor development projects, although this is a relatively new trend within the Islamic NGO group.

As some Western NGOs were used as a channel and cover for military funding of various Afghan mujahideen groups and western intelligence agencies so was some International Islamic NGOs used for supporting mujahideen groups and in support of Muslims joining the Afghan *jihad*. The ICC recognised this as a problem for the humanitarian profile of their members, emphasising that the majority of their members had been involved in such activities and that a large number of more jihad support oriented organisations had never been ICC members.<sup>59</sup>

### *Relations with Forced Migrants*

The focus of many Islamic NGOs has been on the plight of Afghan Muslims who have been forced to flee their home country, and as such are eligible to receive *zakat* or *saddaka* from the international Muslim community. Such a process, however, is rather fixed, with less need for contact with and involvement of forced migrants as there are set limitations on what type of assistance can be provided, though it could be questioned whether the rather relief-oriented approach that seems to be favoured by a majority of these NGOs would be beneficial in the longer run. The very limited involvement of Islamic NGOs and donors in Afghan and international coordination arrangements, except in ICVA and those within the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), sets some limitations on their international advocacy role. On the other hand, international Islamic networks will be able to communicate the plight of Afghan forced migrants to Muslims worldwide, and contribute to make their situation known and raise funds for them.

#### **6.1.3. Western NGOs**

A Western NGO (WNGO) is defined as an NGO with headquarters in a Western country and/or drawing its support and funds from Western countries. The majority of these NGOs operate in a number of countries, although several NGOs, among them the largest NGOs operating in Afghanistan, were established with the sole purpose of supporting Afghans. A large number of these NGOs operate according to a general mandate; some are specialised in a particular field, for example healthcare, while others are specialised in emergency support operations.

Of this group, from the point of view of funds, the largest NGOs are international, operating in Afghanistan since the beginning of the 1980s and established with the

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<sup>59</sup> This issues was discussed at length with the ICC Steering Committee in 1999, as by then the US had imposed sanctions on Afghanistan for housing Al-Qaeda.

purpose of providing assistance to Afghans.<sup>60</sup> The Western NGO group also includes larger multinational NGOs, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), CARE and a number of Save the Children organisations. Despite a reduction in funding, notably since 1998 as a result of European Union and ECHO donation reductions or suspension and the Department for International Development's (DfID) imposition of sanctions, these NGOs still receive the major share of available funding. Based on information on 52 Western NGOs (ACBAR 1999), 19 of which are non-members of a coordinating body, it appears that in 1998 these NGOs had an overall budget of US\$ 81,111,600, or an average of 1.55 millions. This translates into approximately 64.4% of the total NGO budget.

A number of international NGOs, with a very large funding base, remain non-members of coordinating bodies,<sup>61</sup> while the longest established NGO in Afghanistan, International Assistance Mission (IAM), is not a member of a countrywide coordinating body, but actively takes part in coordination efforts at a local level. The result is that in the field of medical and healthcare, 44% of funds are handled by NGOs which are not members of any coordinating body.

### *Type of NGO*

Western NGOs have their main funding base and members in their home countries. As such, one basic criterion for being an NGO is fulfilled, although many of them are to a large extent dependent on funding from governmental sources.

Another feature some Western NGOs exhibit in Afghanistan is an almost state-like function, for example the SCA, which assists education in the larger areas of Afghanistan through their support of teachers' salaries and provision of schoolbooks. These NGOs operate more as service providers, although not necessarily on behalf of the national Government, but instead on behalf of external donors. Experience from other countries, such as Sudan (Tvedt 1995), indicate that NGOs can often become a 'second government' as a result of the controlling more funds than the respective nation state.

With respect to the challenge of a more developmental approach, Western NGOs have different practices. Some look to the long term, for example, by investing in staff training and working on longer-term budgets where funding is sought from development sources.<sup>62</sup> Others were by the late 1990s still grappling with the concept of development, the SCA being an example, and have been unable to extend that particular debate further. An important challenge for WNGOs seems to be finding ways in which strong partnerships, at all levels, can be built with Afghan civil society in order to establish links with, and provide support to, those who will eventually become the future 'backbone' of Afghan society.

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<sup>60</sup> This include the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Mission d'Aide au Développement des Économies Rurales en Afghanistan (MADERA), Solidarity, and the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC).

<sup>61</sup> Among these are a number of French NGOs such as Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Médecine de Monde (MDM) and Action against Hunger (AICF).

<sup>62</sup> Norwegian Church Aid is an example of such an agency, seeking support for an educational programme, to be implemented by ADA, from the Norwegian Development Agency (NORAD).

However, many of these NGOs appear not to have moved fully to a more development-oriented approach, which might include developing a deeper understanding of community participation by becoming more aware that community participation implies that a community leads the process, and not *vice versa*, which has been the main tendency of WNGOs over recent decades, assisting what have been defined as victims of the Afghan conflict.

### *Analysis of NGO Group*

For almost two decades, WNGOs have enjoyed a prominent position as aid-providers and spokespersons for the Afghan community. If one adopts a critical stance, in particular when conflict between national and international NGOs is intense, it may be easy to forget the humanitarian achievements of this group in very daunting and, at times, dangerous circumstances. Nevertheless, such achievements should not excuse a more critical review. The first criticism which could be made is that quantity of projects, rather than quality, appears often to have been a predominant motivation and driving force. A telling example is the focus on the number of doctors and health posts as indicators of increased public health, while, arguably, access to safe water and knowledge of hygiene could probably have had a more positive impact on the health situation, especially in rural areas. A second criticism, which is frequently levelled by many Afghans, is their general lack of knowledge and appreciation of Afghan society and the social situation in Afghanistan. If these organisations wish to involve Afghans in more development-oriented approaches, their argument is that this needs to be rectified.

The strength of this group is clearly their NGO profile. Having foundations in their home countries has enabled this group to maintain and develop professional organisations, secure funding for their operations, and draw lessons from other engagements; and has given them the opportunity to influence donors and policy makers through international networks.

### *Relations with Forced Migrants*

Among WNGOs there are also NGOs that have paid particular attention to forced migrants, including an NGO like Danish Agencies for Aid for Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), established to support Afghan refugees and which lately has been involved in projects to assist return and resettlement, such as the safe water supply projects that are funded by UNHCR (UNHCR Protection Officer Kandahar, private communication, 2001). The various Save the Children Alliances have all been engaged in refugee assistance and support to IDP children, such as in the 'Russian Compound' in Kabul in 2001 (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 47), as has the International Rescue Committee (IRC 1998). While the Norwegian Refugee Council withdrew operationally from Afghanistan in 1994, their engagement in the Global IDP projects (Global IDP Database 2001) and in publishing the 'Forced Migration Review',<sup>63</sup> has secured updates on the IDP situation in the country, and international advocacy on

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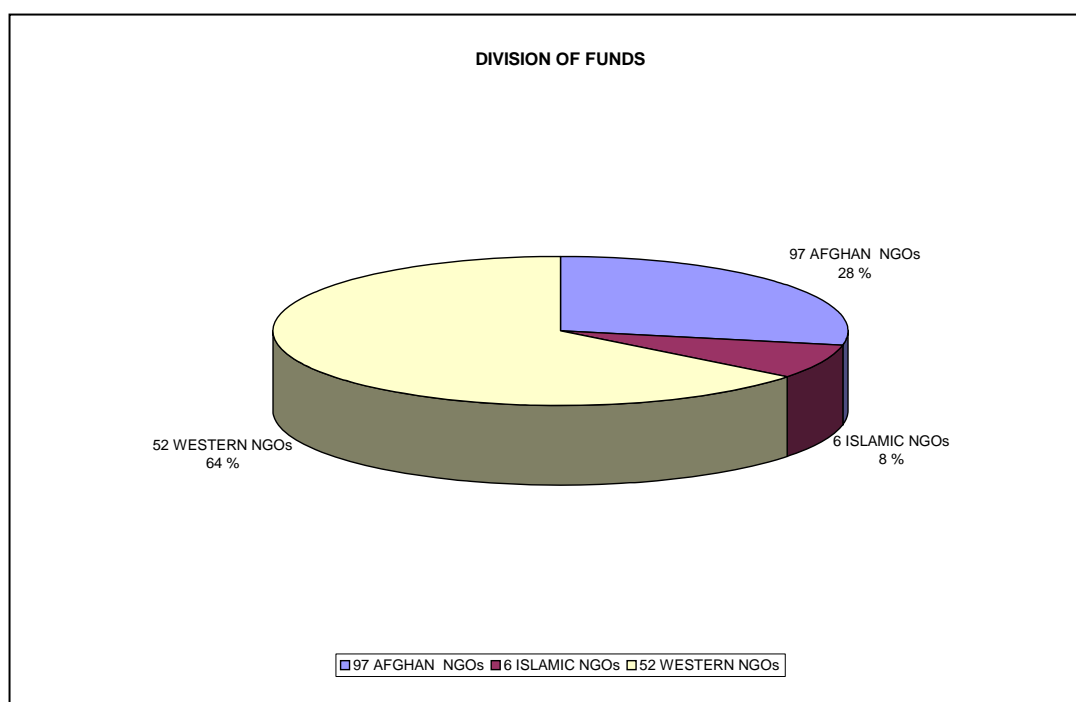
<sup>63</sup> This publication is available at <http://www.fmreview.org>

behalf of internally displaced Afghans. As such, a large number of WNGOs has been involved in aiding and assisting Afghan forced migrants since 1979, though mostly with emergency relief assistance and advocacy/fundraising in Western countries.

#### 6.1.4. Division of Funds

Based on information supplied by 155 NGOs to the ‘Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief’s Directory of Humanitarian Agencies Working for Afghans’ (ACBAR 1999) on their 1998 activities and budgets, the total NGO budget is approximately US\$126 million. However, these funds are rather unevenly distributed between the 52 Western, 97 Afghan and 8 Islamic NGOs listed, as the following breakdown of percentages of funding between types of agency in Box 18 below illustrates.

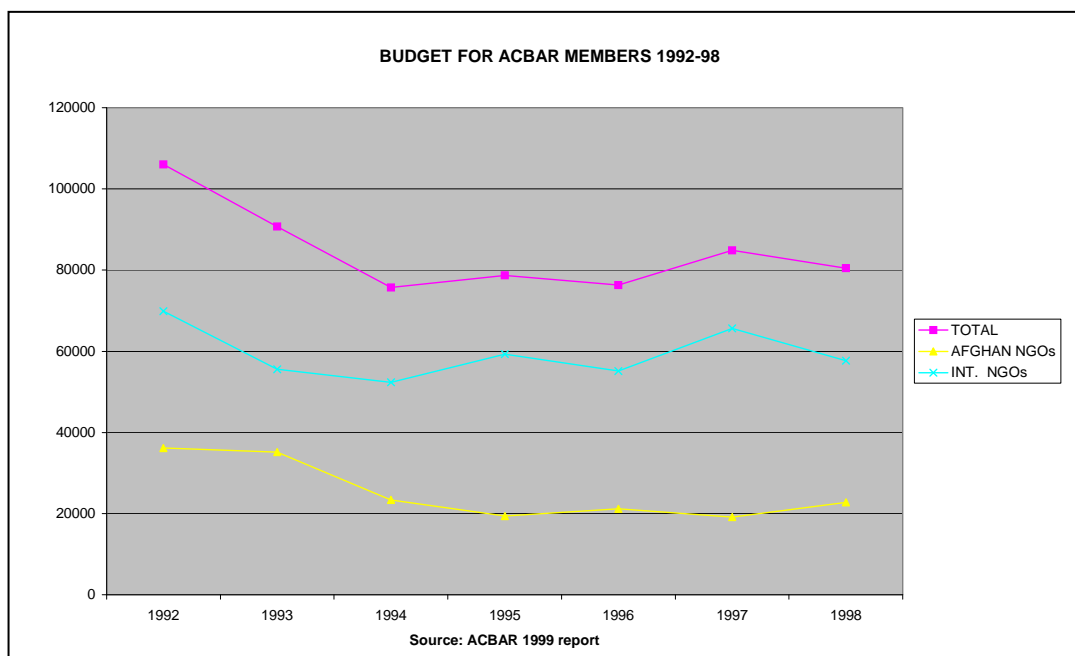
It should further be noted that a large percentage of funds are handled by agencies that are *not* members of a coordinating body. On average, again according to available ACBAR figures, such agencies command 22.5% of the overall NGO budget. With respect to the health sector, however, the percentage is higher, with more than 44% of such funds being administered by agencies not members of a coordinating body. These figures exclude the budget of the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society, where at least the ICRC has a very large medical operation in place all over Afghanistan, and furthermore, the ARCS has large agriculture and relief projects (ARCS information department, personal communication, 2001).



**Box 18:** Funding Division Between Types of NGOs

**Source:** ACBAR, 1999

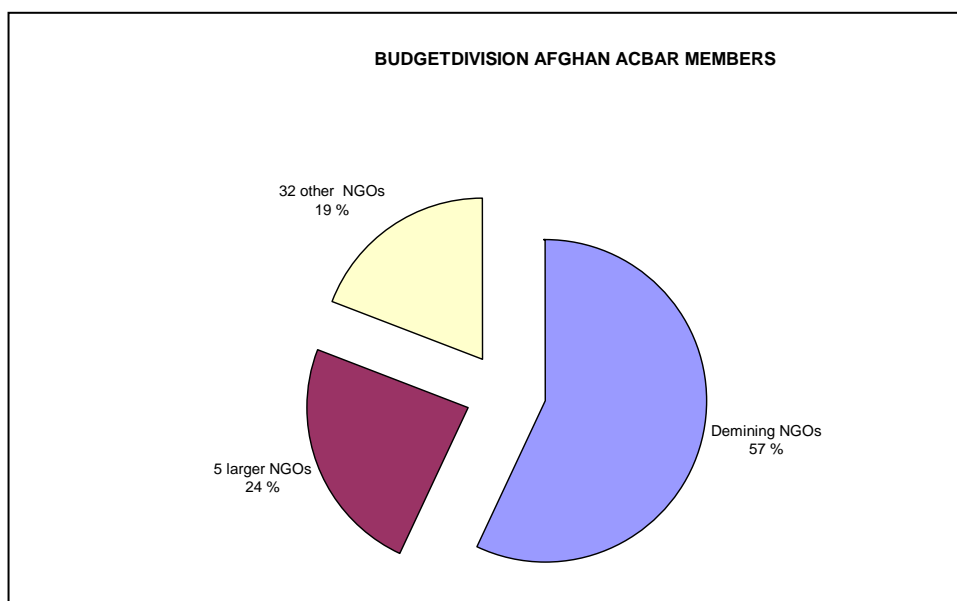
From the presentation in Box 19 below it further appears that the budgets for ACBAR members, accounting for approximately US \$ 80 million of the total 1998 budget of US \$ 126 million, have had a steady decrease from 1992 to 1998, though only with limited fluctuations from 1994 onwards. This should imply that donors maintained their support for the NGOs through the early period of the Taliban's reign, although a small reduction is noticed for international NGOs in 1998.



**Box 19:** Budgets for ACBAR Members, 1993-98

**Source:** ACBAR, 1999

It could furthermore be noticed that of the fifteen NGOs with the highest declared budgets, eleven are international NGOs (with four of these working solely for Afghanistan), one is a donor NGO (whose funds are also reflected in the budgets of the NGOs supported), and only four are Afghan NGOs. However, the division of funds among Afghan NGOs, with ACBAR membership, is equally uneven, as illustrated below in Box 20. Due to the scale of their operation, the large number of employees and the rather high costs incurred for their activities, it comes as no surprise that the three major Afghan demining NGOs command 57 % of the funding allocated. More interestingly, five larger Afghan NGOs, mostly involved in more comprehensive rehabilitation and development projects, have managed to secure 24 % of the funds, with the 32 other, smaller Afghan NGOs competing for the remaining 19 %. It is assumed that many of these latter projects were single Food for Work projects, supported by the World Food Programme, while the larger NGOs both benefit from WFP support and funding for more comprehensive programmes (usually with a one-year timeframe) from a range of UN and NGO donors, as well as from support from the European Union and single countries, such as the Netherlands.



**Box 20:** *Division of Funds Between Afghan NGO Members of ACBAR*

**Source:** ACBAR, 1999

### 6.1.5. A Divided NGO Community

There is one further side of the wider NGO environment that needs to be reviewed, which is how divided the Afghan NGO community is along the above described national and religious lines of division and how this possibly might affect their will and ability to collaborate and coordinate their humanitarian efforts.

The description of the two IDP camps in Jalalabad in 1994-95, with one run by Western NGOs and the UN on one side of a road and one managed by Islamic NGOs on the other side, is illustrative of the divide that existed between these NGOs groups. These two groups were the first to be firmly established in Pakistan in the early 1980s, and were on their respective sides representing the West's ambition to overthrow a Communist government in Kabul and the Islamic world's support for a struggle to end an infidel invasion of a Muslim country. The meeting point between political (and partly Christian) and religiously motivated (Islamic) support was only a short-lived marriage of convenience, as both sides soon traded accusations of religious motivations for their respective support, and avoided collaboration while rather competing for the attention of the Afghans they wished to support. The Afghan NGOs (and commanders) could then use this conflict to draw support from either side, which could be one contributing factor to the high number of contractors that emerged on the Afghan side.

The author, examining the lack of interaction, collaboration and coordination between the Western and Islamic NGOs (Strand 1998), identified three main reasons for the division between these two main NGO groups. The first, based on a general

historical mistrust that has existed between the Western and the Islamic world over decades, is explained by Esposito (1992:24):

*Muslim-Christian relations have often seemed a history of confrontation, with each side regarding the other as a historic threat from the rise of Islam to the present. Early encounters and confrontations, theological and political, provides the image and folklore which sustain the mutual stereotypes, images, and suspicions that continue to fuel fears and biases and perpetuate a vision of Islam against the West or of the West against Islam.*

A long history of colonisation by the West and missionary activities by both sides has led to what Huntington (1993; 1997) has defined as a ‘Clash of Civilisations’. However, it was also the economic growth in the Islamic world, particularly the oil-rich nations of the Middle East, which enabled the support both for the Afghan warring factions and for the Islamic NGOs. It is Esposito (op. cit. 17) that has identified what might also be a contributing factor for the tension that existed between Islamic and Western groups and humanitarian agencies aiding and supporting the Afghans:

*For many in the Muslim world the new wealth, success, and the power of the oil-rich countries seemed to indicate a return of the power of Islam to a community whose centuries-long political and cultural ascendancy has been shattered by European colonialism and, despite independence, by second-class status in a superpower-dominated world.*

A second contributing factor builds partly on the increase in funds for Islamic NGOs, but not so much due to the level of funding as to the difference that emerged in the humanitarian approach between Islamic and Western NGOs. The Islamic ones were apparently more ‘religiously oriented’ in their approach, when supporting religious education and the building of large orphanages where the mosque was dominantly placed, and with the distribution of meat at important Islamic events. Thus, Western NGOs regarded the Islamic NGOs as providing religious rather than humanitarian support, while a few Christian NGOs which actively attempted to convert Muslims to Christianity were regarded by the Islamic NGOs as the archetype of a Western NGO.

A third factor that led to these pictures and assumptions not being modified was the concrete lack of a meeting point between these two NGO communities, symbolised by Westerners meeting at the bar while Muslims would meet at the mosque. Both group’s inability to seek a neutral meeting place in a contested NGO environment maintained the conflict at a personal level as well, without any modifying elements to break through the high wall of suspicion that had been erected over a number of years, where also language differences helped maintain the separation.<sup>64</sup>

#### **6.1.6. NGOs and Forced Migrants**

Given the high degree of forced migration in Afghanistan, assisting forced migrants has been highly prioritised by NGOs over the years of their engagement in the

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<sup>64</sup> There were fortunately a few exceptions, not least provided by some Islamic NGOs attending ACBAR meetings and a prominent staff member elected to the ACBAR Steering Committee for a number of years.



country. During the 1980s the main engagement was with those displaced in Pakistan, although no attention was paid to those Afghan refugees that fled to Iran. During the early 1990s the argument for NGOs when shifting projects inside Afghanistan was to assist returning refugees and to provide a pull factor and enable the returnees to resettle in their home areas. This strategy was partly disrupted due to the infighting in the Mujahideen government that caused widespread internal displacement, with NGOs prioritising assistance to the large number of Afghans fleeing Kabul. Much of the rehabilitation activity, including Humanitarian Mine Action, has focused on enabling returned Afghans to establish a safe livelihood with provision of safe water and shelter, and furthermore, possibilities for income through agricultural activities or other forms of income-generating programme through various loan schemes and training programmes.<sup>65</sup> During the latter years many NGOs have become involved in assisting those forced to flee from the effects of the drought and military activities, and, with the Taliban, more attention focused on the violations of rights of the Afghan population.

What, however, is notable is the low engagement that is recorded on the side of advocacy and rights of the forced migrants, and most notably against oppression and abuses by shifting Afghan groups and governments. Here the NGOs appear to restrict themselves to providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict, rather than attempting to avoid conflicts or protect particularly vulnerable groups, except, from the late 1990s onwards, the rights of women and girls.

### 6.1.7. Conclusion

As documented, it is a rather diverse group of NGOs that has provided assistance to Afghan forced migrants in Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries since 1979. One can choose several ways of categorising NGO actors currently on the Afghan relief scene. The categories used above were based on a national or religious foundation. Such a division, however, plays down language differences, in particular within the Western group where a division line is drawn between English- and French-speaking agencies.<sup>66</sup> Division according to national or religious foundation has shown, on the one hand, that there exists a group of international NGOs (Western and Islamic) with a long history of providing aid and a greater share of funds and, on the other, a large group of national NGOs with less experience and funds.

There exist both international and national NGOs within each category which show both great competence and an understanding of the situation of forced migrants in Afghanistan. The overall picture, however, is of an NGO community that is largely driven by their access to funding, and the needs of the forced migrants becomes secondary to the needs of the agencies to maintain their operation, although, when these two needs overlap, the NGOs might play a significant role in fundraising for forced migrants, as they did for drought-related migrants in Herat in late 2000.

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<sup>65</sup> Many modelled their programmes on the structures established by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, as Save the Children US did in the northern areas of Afghanistan.

<sup>66</sup> One major discussion at the early days of ACBAR was whether meetings should be conducted in French or English, or in both languages, although gradually it ended up with English.

The majority of the NGOs have over the years placed themselves in opposition to the Afghan government, be that the active attempts to overthrow the Communist Government by military means during the 1980s, a reluctant and business-oriented approach towards the mujahideen government during the early 1990s, or the divided NGO community that either kept a distant relationship with the Taliban authorities or opposed it with all means during the late 1990s. The main tendency over the years have been for the NGOs strictly to protect their independence from the Afghan government and continue their operations with limited or no involvement from any Afghans, whether the authorities or civil society representatives.

## 6.2. NGO Coordination Arrangements

During the mid 1980s, a number of solidarity and medical NGOs moved on from providing refugee-oriented assistance in Pakistan to operating cross-border programmes inside Afghanistan. Few measures were taken to control or coordinate the use and impact of that support on either the Pakistani or the Afghan side, and agencies generally refused to share information with anyone as many of the operations were conducted in secrecy due to a fear of attacks on aid convoys or projects, and the fact that the Pakistani border was crossed illegally.<sup>67</sup>

But from 1985 onwards NGOs sharing a degree of commonality, such as the Islamic Coordination Council (ICC) having a common Islamic identity, or working with the provision of medical assistance inside Afghanistan or relief to refugees in Pakistan, started to form smaller coordination bodies.<sup>68</sup>

With the Geneva Accord in 1988 the UN positioned itself to work out of Pakistan, establishing the United Nation Office for Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes in Afghanistan (UNOCA). According to Nicholds and Burton (1994: 87-88), it requested the ICVA to take on the role of coordinating NGOs in Peshawar and Quetta. That caused NGOs to establish the Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) in Peshawar in 1988, followed by NGOs operating from Quetta, which established the Southern and Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC).

There had only been a small number of Afghan NGOs, many of them founded by Afghan doctors, active in Pakistan during the 1980s (Nicholds and Borton 1994: 34). However, following a UN decision in 1989 to promote the establishment of Afghan NGOs, and much discourse about 'Afghanisation' of the NGO sector and demand for increased Afghan influence in ACBAR, a separate Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB) was established in 1991 (Bennett 1995).

From 1992 onwards, many NGOs moved to Kabul and as the mujahideen government did not establish any coordination structure a number of Afghan and

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<sup>67</sup> The author's first border crossing was undertaken dressed as an Afghan, with dyed hair and beard, through a long detour bypassing the official border posts.

<sup>68</sup> Those listed by Nicholds and Burton (1994: 86-87) were in addition to ICC, the Voluntary Agency Group (refugee assistance); Committee on Medical Coordination (cross-border health programmes); Cooperative Committee (agricultural cross-border) and the Joint Council.

international NGOs, with United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (UNCHS/Habitat) having a facilitator role, established the Kabul Emergency Program (KEP). It became a well-functioning coordination system with a minimum of bureaucratic procedures, but ceased functioning when ACBAR and the UN established a presence there in 1995. The same year a small coordination unit, the National Coordination Board, was established in Herat among Afghan and Western NGOs.

As the Taliban gained control over Kabul in 1996, tension gradually increased between NGOs and the Taliban administration, as they wished to exercise larger control over the NGO sector. Consequently, the Ministry of Planning (MoP) in Kabul announced in April 1999 that ACBAR would not be allowed to run a coordination mechanism in Kabul, on the grounds that coordination was a task to be handled by the Ministry (Strand, Lander et al. 1999: 33).

In parallel with these events the United Nations developed its Strategic Framework Approach (UN Inter-Agency Mission to Islamabad and Afghanistan 1997), and some donor countries organised themselves as the Afghan Support Group (ASG). On 24 April 1998, the Principled Programming Process (PCP) was introduced, suggesting a common UN, donor and NGO coordination structure (OCHA 1998), although excluding the then Afghan authorities, the Taliban.

### **6.2.1. Overview of NGO Coordinating Bodies**

By spring 1999 there were five NGO coordinating bodies (CBs) of which NGOs, working either inside Afghanistan or for Afghan refugees in Pakistan, might become members if meeting their membership requirements. Three of these coordinating bodies had a countrywide coverage while two involve NGOs working in two specific regions of Afghanistan only. The five countrywide and regional coordinating bodies respectively were:

#### ***A. Countrywide Coordinating Bodies***

- **Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)**  
Established in 1988, based in Peshawar with 73 member agencies, including Afghan, Islamic and Western NGOs.
- **Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB)**  
Established in 1991, based in Peshawar with 106 Afghan NGO members and also a member of the International Consortium of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).
- **Islamic Coordination Council (ICC)**  
Established in 1985, based in Peshawar, with 11 member agencies from Islamic countries, and in addition the ANCB.

### B. Regional Coordinating Bodies

- **NGOs' Coordinating Body (NCB)**  
Established in 1995, based in Herat with 12 member agencies, including both Western and Afghan NGOs.
- **Southern and Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC)**  
Established in 1988, based in Quetta/Kandahar with 80 Afghan and 1 international member agencies.

Of the 252 NGOs registered as coordinating body members, as many as 27 were member of 2 CBs, 6 were member of 3 CBs and 1 NGO was a member of 4 CBs. A comparison of some basic features of the coordinating bodies is presented below in Table 5.

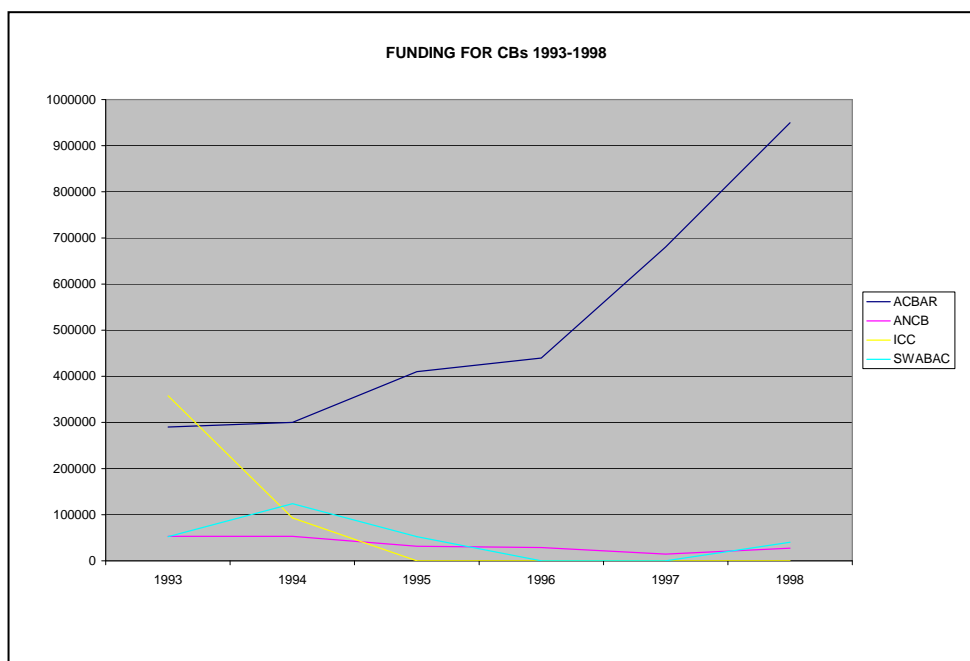
Organisation	Staff in Afghanistan	Staff in Pakistan	Expatriate staff	Budget 1998, in US \$	No. of member agencies	Working language	Commercial activities
ACBAR	44	91	5	950 000	73	English	Yes
ANCB		15		27 300	106	Dari/Pashtu/ English	Training
ICC		2		NA	11	Arabic/ English	No
NCB	1			NA	12	Dari/ English	No
SWABAC	32 <sup>69</sup>			40 150	81	Dari/Pashtu	Yes

**Table 5:** Comparison of Coordinating Bodies, Status by 1999

**Source:** ACBAR, ANCB, ICC, NCB and SWABAC, 1999

The financial resource each coordinating body has at its disposal has changed considerably over recent years. The various amounts are shown below in Box 21, although it should be noted that 1994 was the last year that ICC published its annual budget and more recent figures were not available. No figures have been available for NCB, though it is known that it had benefited from a grant from the Dutch donor NOVIB that came to an end in late 1999. As we will see later in this chapter, however, the ACBAR budget does include some of its commercial activities and the survey department in addition to its coordination activities.

<sup>69</sup> These numbers include 18 staff supervising UN projects.



**Box 21:** Budgets for CBs 1993-98 (in US dollars)

**Source:** ACBAR (1999)

Below follows a more detailed description of the coordinating bodies working in Pakistan and Afghanistan, presented according to year of establishment.

### 6.2.2. Islamic Coordination Council (ICC)

The Islamic Coordination Council (ICC), with a stated aim to ‘contribute in rehabilitation, reconstruction and development endeavours’ (ICC 1995), was the first NGO coordinating body to be established. A contributing factor to the establishment was a fear of Western influence on the Muslim Afghan refugees through the relief activities of the UN and the NGOs.<sup>70</sup> Internationally, the ICC is a member of the General Relief Committee (a sub-committee of the International Islamic Council for Daw'ah and Relief) and was active in the Partnership in Action Conferences (PARinAC) initiated by UNHCR (Strand 1998:36).

#### *Stated Objectives*

The goal of the ICC is to provide a forum in which member organisations can discuss their concerns, design policy guidelines for delivery of assistance, resource management and other operational issues, ‘in accordance with Islam’. The ICC’s ultimate purpose is to improve coordination between agencies providing assistance to refugees in NWFP and elsewhere, to increase services and efficiency, as well as to assist with repatriation and resettlement of Afghan refugees, ‘the achievement of the

<sup>70</sup> This has been expressed in interviews with the ICC Director and Executive Committee.

goal of Islamic voluntary work'. The ICC further emphasises its relationship with the Afghan authorities, and advocacy and fundraising in the Islamic world as well as collaboration with the UN and other NGOs (ICC 1999).

### *Membership and Organisational Matters*

ICC membership is exclusively for Muslim organisations working for Afghans, which, further, are willing to commit themselves to abide by the Council's regulations and pay membership fees.

The ICC's highest authority is the General Assembly, which elects an Executive Committee. In addition, the ICC reports that it has a planning and follow-up committee and four committees for health, education, social welfare and construction, though there were no records of committee meetings made available upon request.

The ICC is a member of the Afghan Planning Board and, according to the Executive Committee (personal communication, 1999), also maintains contacts with embassies, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Muslim donors. While membership of the other four coordinating bodies has increased over time, membership of the ICC has declined.

No recent details of funds or donors were available but the ICC has an office in Peshawar and is represented through member agencies inside Afghanistan. According to the ICC Coordinator the organisation holds regular meetings, but interest among members in attending varies.

### *Conclusion*

The ICC is the smallest of the national coordinating bodies, represents a group of NGOs unified by a common religion, and has a very limited range of activities amongst its members. However, among its members are some of the most experienced NGOs on the Afghan relief scene, with key staff that have worked for more than a decade with the Afghans in general and Afghan forced migrants in particular. The ICC Executive Committee expressed a positive attitude towards relating to the Taliban authorities on humanitarian grounds, arguing that bypassing the Taliban could cause further alienation and a worsened working environment for NGOs. There was, further, a large concern among Islamic NGOs and the ICC about the exclusion of Muslim donors and governments from the Afghan Planning Board, and their difficulties in being invited to the meetings of the Afghan Support Group.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Sweden, when chairing the Afghan Support Group, only invited ACBAR to the ASG meeting, arguing that this organisation was the only one coordinating body that had both Islamic, Western and Afghan NGO members, and was thus impartial (personal communication with ICC and ANCB, 1999).

### **6.2.3. Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)**

When NGOs in the summer of 1988 formed a unified NGO coordinating body, named the Agencies Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), the official purpose was to facilitate information sharing and to secure a unified approach with respect to the UN and international donors which, at that time, were in a process of stepping up programmes following the Soviet withdrawal (Bennett 1995). As discussed earlier in this chapter, a factor that strongly contributed to its establishment was protection of NGO interests in fear of being overrun by the UN.

#### *Stated Objectives*

The Statutes of Operation (4th. Edition- January 1999) (ACBAR 1999) state that, besides being an independent coordination body with the purpose of coordinating its members in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghans:

*ACBAR provides the framework within which NGOs, contractors, the UN and bilateral donors can exchange information, share expertise and establish guidelines for a more coordinated, efficient and effective use of resources for aid to the Afghan people.*

Among the objectives of ACBAR are the intentions to maximise the benefits of available resources and to minimise unnecessary duplication, and the body sees its role as being to facilitate contact between aid actors and governments, provide services to their members and produce and solicit information materials. ACBAR, however, acknowledges that it only has a facilitation role as Chapter 3 underscores that: 'Member organisations have complete autonomy. ACBAR can only provide guidelines and a level of consensus with which an individual member is expected to concur voluntarily.'

While otherwise open to all types of NGO member, ACBAR demands that its members hold a minimum average annual budget of at least US\$50,000 for the last three years, and be registered with either the Pakistani or Afghan government, which in effect excludes smaller NGOs and certainly more informal community organisations.

#### *Membership and Organisational Matters*

By March 1999, ACBAR had an equal balance of international NGOs and Afghan NGOs, and only two Islamic NGOs, which also hold dual membership with the ICC. In addition to ACBAR's main office in Peshawar, field offices were established in Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad. However, by spring 1999 Taliban had closed both the Kabul and Jalalabad offices. The Herat office thus operated in tandem with the NCB office as this proved less controversial with the Taliban administration. The ACBAR

budget had doubled from 1996 to 1998 (ACBAR 1998), with funds coming from various donors, as well as ACBAR's commercial activities.<sup>72</sup>

ACBAR organised a range of sectoral coordination committees both in Peshawar and in Kabul, such as for health, water and sanitation, education and agriculture. There were also regional coordination meetings, of which most took place inside Afghanistan (ACBAR 1998:26-55), and a sub-committee for Afghan women affairs. In addition, ACBAR held a monthly General Assembly that also functioned as a forum for information and debate between the UN, donors and the NGO community.

ACBAR had further established a range of services for its members, including a mail-pouch service between Peshawar and the largest Afghan cities, maintenance of a database of NGO projects enabling annual publication of a 'Database for NGO Activities' and a 'Directory of Humanitarian Agencies working for Afghans' (as examples see ACBAR 1998;1999). It also disseminated information to members, and prepared guidelines and recommendations on standards and modes of operation.

### *Commercial Activities*

ACBAR was furthermore involved in certain commercial activities (ACBAR 1998), including the ACBAR Survey Unit, which undertakes surveys, collects information for baseline data and carries out monitoring for ACBAR and donors, the ACBAR Printing Press, which, on a commercial basis, prints a variety of literature;<sup>73</sup> and the Health Education Resource Centre (HERC), which produces silk-screen prints to serve the aid community and general public. All of these entities have been taken over from NGOs as they were about to be closed down.

### *Resources Based at ACBAR*

One important resource for the wider humanitarian community is the ACBAR Resource and Information Centre (ARIC), which contains a comprehensive library on Afghanistan and NGO-related issues, and which also operates the ARIC Box Library Extension (ABLE).

### *Conclusion*

ACBAR is the most active NGO coordinating body, with the widest range of activities and services to its members, and the only coordinating body to have members from all three main NGO groups. Throughout the latter part of the 1990s ACBAR expanded its operations by establishing offices inside Afghanistan and commercial activities in Pakistan, but its continued conflict with the Taliban,

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<sup>72</sup> It later appeared that the income from the commercial activities was less than anticipated, as when in 2001 a new Executive Director was hired he found that ACBAR was in deep financial trouble and had to impose strict budget cuts (personal communication, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> This example illustrates a recurring problem with NGO coordination bodies as here ACBAR was competing with several of its members for the ownership of the press, causing a high degree of tension within the ACBAR Steering Committee (personal communication, 1999).



increased focus on the joint NGO, UN and donor coordinating bodies (Afghan Planning Board and Regional Coordination Bodies) and general decrease in funding for coordination activities led to a financial and organisational crisis in spring 2001.<sup>74</sup>

ACBAR is the coordinating body most frequently referred to by donors and which most often is invited to international conferences and donor meetings. As a result, on behalf of its members it has managed to secure an important role in ongoing aid debates. The Afghan authorities, donors, other NGOs and coordinating bodies, therefore, pay closer attention to this particular coordinating body with the consequence that internal differences have attracted the attention of the relief community at large.

#### **6.2.4. Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB)**

The Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB) was established in 1991 by a number of Afghan NGOs hoping to achieve better cooperation and secure more influence and funding for national NGOs than they felt was possible within ACBAR. Its Activity Report, which covers the period 1991 to 1996, highlights 3 main types of activity (ANCB 1997):

- Coordination among NGOs.
- Provision of technical support in the form of workshops, seminars, technical committees and courses.
- Promotion of volunteerism and local participation.

The report emphasises the language difference between ANCB and donors, which the Bureau considers to have been a major problem for their interaction with (and funding from) the donor community.

##### *Stated Objectives*

According to Article 1 of ANCB's Charter (ANCB 1999),<sup>75</sup> the organisation is a non-governmental, non-political, non-profit-making and non-discriminating body that primarily exists to a) maintain coordination among the Afghan non-governmental organisations; and b) maintain relationships with international agencies and the donors, based on international regulations, for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

The charter explicitly states that the ANCB respects the laws enacted by the central government of Afghanistan, and that its main aim is the promotion, development and improvement of the activities of the member agencies. To accomplish these goals the ANCB has set out to undertake a range of tasks, including the development of member agencies, the provision of technical and financial assistance, the

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Chris Kay, ACBAR Executive Director, February 2001.

<sup>75</sup> The Charter is an unofficially translated version from its original in Farsi and Pashtu, provided by ACBAR.

establishment of baseline data, to maintain government and donor relations, and to encourage establishment of new Afghan NGOs.

### *Membership and Organisational Matters*

Only Afghan NGOs are allowed to seek membership in ANCB, and to ensure Afghan influence a membership requirement is that the Steering Committee of such NGOs should comprise at least five Afghan nationals (ANCB 1999).

The ANCB is governed by a General Assembly, holding biannual meetings, which delegates authority to a Steering Committee, holding bimonthly meetings, whereas other meetings might be called when required. Its office is in Peshawar and the establishment of an office inside Afghanistan was postponed due to a lack of funding. It is to be noted that in 1998/99 the ANCB's Steering Committee had two female members, the only one to do so among the coordinating bodies. The ANCB, struggling to raise funds for coordination activities in 2000 and 2001, managed, however, to secure donations for various training courses for its members and projects, thus maintaining a certain activity level.<sup>76</sup>

The ANCB budget is mainly derived from membership fees and financial support for the Bureau's capacity-building programme. This figure represents a 50% reduction on the ANCB's 1994 budget, although it does represent an increase compared to the figures reported for 1997, which, at US\$15,000, were reported to be the lowest ever. The ANCB Director confirmed that its income from membership fees had been sharply reduced as a number of Afghan NGOs were struggling for survival.

### *Meeting Activities*

By mid-1999 the ANCB had no regular sectoral or area-based meetings, although according to the Steering Committee occasional interest meetings are convened when specific matters of concern or interest arise. The ANCB is member of the Afghanistan Programming Board (APB).

Among the services to its members it lists training and refresher courses for Afghan female staff, though this is also an income-generating activity, ensuring that it maintains its office and a skeleton staff structure.

### *Conclusion*

Given the ANCB's stated aim to present itself and its views to a wider audience, it is clear that a funding crisis within the NGO community has badly affected its activities and commitments. The organisation is present on the relief scene, but the Bureau takes fewer initiatives than it did some years ago. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the ANCB's members seem to value the opportunity to be part of an all-Afghan organisation, where a good command of English or Arabic is not necessary

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Dr. Mumtaz, ANCB Coordinator, February 2001.

in order to present their views. Since 1998, despite any shortcomings, the ANCB has, through the PCP and attendance at the APB, managed to regain its importance as a spokesperson and representative of Afghan NGOs.

#### **6.2.5. South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC)**

NGOs operating from Quetta, located in the Baluchistan Province of Pakistan, had practical difficulties attending ACBAR meetings held in Peshawar. Consequently, to safeguard the interests of these agencies in August 1988 a separate coordinating body was established, called the South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC). As the number of Afghan NGOs increased during the early 1990s, however, and more activities took place inside Afghanistan, SWABAC, while continuing to maintain a presence in Quetta, also decided to establish an office in Kandahar, which the Association did in 1995/96.

##### *Stated Objectives*

According to the ACBAR directory (ACBAR 1999), which includes a presentation of the major coordinating bodies, SWABAC was established:

*(...) to provide a forum in which member organisations can discuss their concerns regarding policy guidelines for delivering assistance, resource management and other operational issues – with the ultimate purpose of improving co-ordination in refugee assistance in Baluchistan, as well as in the repatriation and resettlement of Afghan refugees.*

In addition, it is stated that ‘SWABAC is a vehicle through which NGO views and interests are communicated to the various multilateral and bilateral donors and the Government of Pakistan.’

##### *Membership and Organisational Matters*

A General Meeting for members is held once a month, and observers are invited to attend. In addition, four sub-committees for medical, agriculture, education and construction issues were established. In 1994, a decision was taken that SWABAC should also publish a monthly newsletter for exchange and update of information; and organise training in areas of management, computer software, project design, supervision, drug awareness and community participation.

SWABAC has been involved in monitoring food-for-work projects on behalf of WFP, as well as a UNDP-implemented project in Kandahar. Thus 80% of SWABAC’s funds came from various UN agencies, with membership fees providing the other 20%.

It is further interesting to note that SWABAC has maintained a very close relationship with varying Afghan authorities. Not only is the organisation registered with the regional authorities in Kandahar and has a certificate from the Kabul

Ministry of Planning, in 1998 they undertook an evaluation of their members together with the Directorate of Planning in Kandahar. The result was that several members had membership suspended on the grounds that they had no office or projects in the region. Those who were approved received a Provincial Registration Certificate, which donors have reportedly acknowledged.

### *Conclusion*

Of all the coordinating bodies, SWABAC appears to have established, on a regional level, the closest relationship with Afghan authorities, and it is the only coordinating body to have become involved in a joint process of validating NGOs for registration certificates. In addition, it is the largest regionally-based coordinating body and has been involved with project monitoring for the UN. All this puts SWABAC in a strong position with respect to controlling individual NGO members.

However, the Association's dependency on funding for non-coordination activities indicates the general difficulty of securing funds for regional coordination activities. Moreover, in contracting the Association to the UN, its independence as a coordinating body might be put at risk. A view held among some NGOs was that there might be a danger that, by taking on non-coordination activities as a means to finance its coordination tasks, SWABAC might find itself competing against its own members over, for example, UN contracts.

With the establishment of a Regional Coordinating Body (RCB) in Kandahar both SWABAC and the Taliban Provincial administration were included, with the SWABAC Chairman elected as RCB Chair.<sup>77</sup> This provided SWABAC with stronger influence on setting and influencing overall policy, and in 2000 the RCB prepared several funding proposals on behalf of its members.<sup>78</sup>

#### **6.2.6. NGOs' Coordination Body (NCB)**

The NGOs' Coordination Body (NCB) was established in Herat as late as 1995, on the initiative of a number of NGOs which recognised a need for a more formal coordination arrangement in that region. During its first years of operation, the NCB had no office or staff, and meetings were held on a rotation basis among the members. Chairmanship and responsibility for minutes were the task of the respective venue owner. As the number of members increased, the need for a more formalised structure became apparent and, in 1997, a coordinator was employed and funding secured through a grant from NOVIB. The NCB was recognised by the local authorities in that year, and as of spring 1999, the Body had a protocol agreement with ACBAR and shared ACBAR's Herat office space.

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<sup>77</sup> The Kandahar RCB was in 2000 regarded as the most inclusive and well functioning RCB, not always approved of by UN offices in Islamabad.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Daoud, SWABAC Chairman, February 2001.

### *Stated Objective*

The NCB has not developed a charter for its operations. Instead, the Bureau's activities were guided by a set of documents, which detail the responsibilities, authority and tasks of Steering Committee members and the coordinator. An overview of NGO activities in Herat and Farah provinces (NCB 1998), published by the NCB in November 1998, states that the main objectives and aim of the organisation is 'to prepare the ground as much as possible for better and effective coordination and cooperation between NCB members.'

### *Membership and Organisational Matters*

Membership of the NCB was open to all NGOs working in this region, irrespective of nationality, and had four international NGO members in addition to the Afghan ones. The NCB's meetings are conducted in Dari when only Afghans participate and English when expatriates are present. The NCB was recognised by the Taliban administration in Herat but the relationship was not an easy one. The NCB coordinator was frequently summoned to the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning matters the Minister considered to be unsatisfactory within the NGO community.

The NCB's income was initially only derived from membership fees; however, the Body also benefited from a grant made by NOVIB for the establishment of a more permanent body and employment of a coordinator, although this support ended in March 1999. With respect to payment of membership fees, this issue was judged as thorny by the NCB members for two reasons. Firstly, several member agencies have already paid a membership fee to ACBAR, and, secondly, no single NGO wanted to carry the bulk of the NCB's expenses for fear of being regarded as a possible controlling factor of the body. Local staff of both NCB and ACBAR therefore advocated a formalised cooperation between the two bodies, with one responsible for financial resources and the other holding Taliban authorisation to work in Herat.

The NCB has only one employee, a coordinator, although cooperation with the ACBAR Herat office means that the Body has access to a number of its resources, both staff and technical facilities.

### *Meeting Activities*

NCB organises monthly NCB member meetings and, together with ACBAR, an interagency meeting open to all NGOs, which is also attended by UN agencies and ICRC/IFRC. In addition, the Body holds monthly sectoral meetings concerning health, education/training, community development, water supply/sanitation and agriculture. Local Ministry officials, for example those from the Health Ministry, are sometimes invited to participate in these meetings. Beside facilitating these meetings, the NCB also produces a quarterly review of current NGO projects in the region.

## *Conclusion*

NCB has an interesting history, beginning as a voluntary, low-key, regional and practical coordination group that later developed to become a larger organisation, mainly involved with practical sector-based coordination and the provision of a forum for exchange of information. As such, the NCB fitted into the RCB concept and was, besides SWABAC, by early 1999 the only coordinating body with a functional regional representation inside Afghanistan. However, and in contrast to Kandahar, a separate arrangement was made for the RCB establishment where UN OCHA staff resumed a more active coordination role, and while less was left to the RCB the importance of this elected body diminished and thus that of an organised NGO community in relation to the United Nations.<sup>79</sup>

It could, however, be noted that by May 1999 it emerged from interviews with national staff of both NCB and ACBAR that both had found the experience of their symbiotic arrangement to be very positive, but reluctance at ACBAR central level became a hindrance for exploring this arrangement further. An interview with the ACBAR Executive Director revealed a general distrust of the NCB, and thus, through superior financial resources, it could outmanoeuvre the NCB.

### **6.2.7. Other Coordination Organisations and Arrangements**

In addition to these coordinating bodies a number of practical coordination arrangements have been established, such as for NGOs working in specific areas of Afghanistan. Examples here are the Kabul Emergency Program, which operated in the mid-1990s, and arrangements established for coordinating between agencies sharing one donor, such as the European Union, NOVIB or Norwegian Church Aid. The extensive collaboration that existed between agencies funded by the European Union and working in the Nangarhar province provides one good example of this type of arrangement (EU representative Peshawar, personal communication, 1999).

Certain attempts at coordination were furthermore linked to the international level. Many European-based NGOs, for example, held membership in the Brussels-based Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) (1999).

On a country level, a similar coordination role is played by the London-based British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), which, it states, has eight UK-based NGO members (private communication, July 1999). Until June 1998 BAAG produced two studies per year on aspects of the humanitarian assistance situation in Afghanistan, as well as a number of situation updates written by Peter Marsden (as an example see BAAG 1996). With respect to promoting their members' ability to seek EU funding, close links were forged with other European NGO headquarters and according to BAAG they joined forces with other NGOs when engaging in discussions with the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Moreover, there is a range of NGOs engaged in Afghanistan that holds membership in international coordination bodies. Six Western NGOs are members of the USA-

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with Hugh Finnton, RCB Chairman, February 2001.

based organisation InterAction. The International Consortium of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) has twelve members with representation in Afghanistan, which includes two Islamic NGOs, ANCB, ICRC and IFRC. The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response is the one, representation-wise, that includes the largest number of NGOs operating in Afghanistan. Thus, a large number of influential international NGOs, either directly or indirectly through membership in an international alliance, are therefore members of one or more of these coordinating bodies. This puts them in a position to influence NGO and United Nations policy, as well as that of the larger donors, such as the European Union; and to advocate on behalf of certain groups or push for more funding for their operations. Several Islamic NGOs were members of the International Islamic Council of Daw'ah and Relief, under the Organisation of Islamic Conference, which has 54 Islamic countries as members (OIC 1998).

### 6.2.8. Major Differences between the Coordinating Bodies

From examining both activities and budgets, it becomes clear that the coordinating bodies experienced a revival from 1998 onwards. This was largely due to the introduction of the UN Strategic Framework and the joint PCP initiatives, which have led to the coordinating bodies being assigned the formidable task of representing the diverse NGO community to both UN agencies and donors. ACBAR, ANCB and ICC, being countrywide bodies, were included in the Afghanistan Programming Board (APB). NCB and SWABAC, being regional bodies, fitted with the concept of the Regional Coordination Body (RCB) although only SWABAC was included in this set-up.<sup>80</sup> As documented, there are two coordination bodies excluding other types of NGOs by their membership criteria, ICC being only for Islamic NGOs and ANCB only for Afghan NGOs, or by the level of funding, as is the rule of ACBAR, although it allows all types of NGOs and contractors as members as long as an annual budget of US\$50,000 is met.

There are, moreover, certain features of the coordinating bodies that distinguish them from each other.

#### *Constituencies*

The coordinating bodies, as member organisations, represent different constituencies within the NGO community:

- ACBAR is the only coordinating body to represent the interests of Western NGOs, as well as Islamic and national NGOs.
- ANCB provides a 'platform' for advocating the interests of national NGOs.
- ICC represents the interests of a small but professional group of agencies joined by a common religion.

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<sup>80</sup> Interviews conducted in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat in April 2001 revealed that there was a very large difference from region to region as to how the RCB and the coordination function was exercised, depending upon the strategy of each UN-assigned regional coordinator and the extent to which the NGOs were invited to participate.

- SWABAC represents a large group of agencies based in Quetta and Kandahar.
- NCB represent agencies operating in Western Afghanistan.

Member groups show a varying degree of commitment towards their coordinating body, although all coordinating bodies have a satisfactory show of attendance at organised meetings and can justify their position towards their constituency.

All coordinating bodies have set criteria for membership, although no coordinating body has gone as far as to give a comprehensive definition of what constitutes an NGO. Instead, the coordinating bodies have listed various standards and obligations that are to be adhered to in order to obtain and maintain membership. Despite acknowledgement that some members do not fulfil these obligations, only ACBAR and SWABAC appear to have cited fulfilment of membership criteria to justify termination of membership. Finally, ICC is the only coordinating body to have reported a reduction of members.

### *Mandates and Major Differences*

Turning to coordinating body mandates, as outlined in their respective charters, all five coordinating bodies' mandates, broadly speaking, are similar and contain no opposing areas of interest. All mandates emphasise the need to maximise benefits and to minimise duplication of assistance, and that this is to be achieved by information sharing and contact between relief actors. However, there are three important differences that do exist between the respective coordinating bodies; they are outlined as follows:

- 1) Differentiation between NGOs and contractors.  
In its Charter, ACBAR has acknowledged that both NGOs and contractors may have membership, on condition that the budget and registration requirement is fulfilled. No other coordination body has such an opportunity for contractors.
- 2) Relationship with the Afghan authorities.  
Only ANCB has a clause in their Charter, which explicitly states that 'the coordinating body respects the laws enacted by the central government of Afghanistan.' While ICC expressed a desire to have a good working relationship with the authorities, and NCB and SWABAC established local contact with the Taliban, none of these organisation officially declared respect for all laws of the Afghan government, while ACBAR clearly stated its opposition to proposed laws and regulations, for example, in connection with the MoU issue. With respect to that particular issue, the Executive Director of ACBAR has stated that ACBAR's more critical stance has resulted in a favourable change for NGOs to the contents of the MoU.
- 3) Facilitated or forced coordination.  
ANCB's Charter contains a chapter on obligations and duties of members. The chapter states that 'member NGOs are to follow all the policies and standards enacted and prepared by ANCB.' This should allow ANCB to operate a very controlled style of coordination on its



members, including policy issues, although this appears not to be the practice. SWABAC's close cooperation with the Department of Planning in Kandahar is also another means by which a more controlled style of coordination could be ensured. By contrast, ACBAR, more than any of the other coordinating bodies, most clearly favours the opposite approach, namely a facilitating role. ACBAR's Charter states that: '[M]ember organisations have complete autonomy', and thus, as a consequence this is naturally followed by the conclusion that 'ACBAR can only provide guidelines and a level of consensus with which an individual member is expected to concur voluntarily.'

### *Activity Levels*

By 1999 all five coordinating bodies were involved in a certain number of activities, although it appears that only ACBAR has sufficient financial resources to provide a more comprehensive service to its members, and fulfil the aims set in its organisational charter. However, as a result of disputes with the Taliban authorities, ACBAR was restricted to working from Pakistan only. That being stated, it is the only coordinating body that has, in recent years, extensively prepared and distributed information material in English, documenting not only its own activities, but also the achievements of the entire NGO community. This, of course, gives ACBAR an advantage over the other coordinating bodies when it comes to being evaluated or seeking funds and, therefore, gives the other coordinating bodies a challenge to improve their presentation. This is one indicator of an apparent and articulated competition between the coordinating bodies for recognition and funding which includes, for example, the need to spend large amounts of money to be represented in the field and to attend donor meetings internationally. Here it appears that the coordinating bodies were at the mercy of the donors, who were the only ones to fund their participation.

### *Services to Members*

Following on from the above, it is of interest, therefore, to review the level of services provided by coordinating bodies to their members. This seems, once again, to depend on respective financial situations. ACBAR's publications have already been mentioned. In addition, ARIC maintains a good library in Peshawar and offers NGOs a monthly update of publications, whereas the ARIC Box Library extension project (ABLE) provides a mechanism for the distribution of information and reading materials inside Afghanistan for NGO staff and common Afghans alike. None of the other coordinating bodies offered comparable services on a continuous basis, since implementing such projects depends on specific and infrequent funding.

With the exception of NCB, all the coordinating bodies emphasises NGO staff training, although actual implementation of such training was not identified except for ANCB that has established specialised training courses for female NGO staff.

A number of practical service tasks have been mentioned, such as organisation of membership cards or visas and mail pouch between Afghan cities and Peshawar, which are provided to all members, irrespective of whether they are groups or single agencies. There have been no recorded differences with respect to both the willingness and ability of each of the coordinating bodies to provide such services.

### *Commercial Activities*

There are two different types of commercial activity undertaken by the coordinating bodies. The first involves being 'contracted' to provide services for project implementation, as has been the case with ACBAR and SWABAC for UN agencies where they have acted as a lead agency. Although this brings with it additional income for the coordinating body, there is a danger first that the coordinating body may become more of an implementing organisation than a coordinating body, and second that possible conflict could arise between a coordinating body and the respective members they are supposed to both represent and control in respect of external donors. Involvement of a coordinating body in contracted activities requires a high level of transparency if the practice is to be acceptable to all its respective members.

The second types of commercial activity are those such as the ACBAR-run printing press, HERC and its Survey Unit. These three activities were taken over from member agencies on the grounds that ACBAR should a) provide a service to the member organisations and b) generate income for the coordinating body. Without going into detail on the achievements of these services it was apparent that some member agencies question whether the resources and time spent running those services were justified by the potential income such activities could generate, and whether the management of ACBAR as a whole suffered as the management spent considerable time on these activities.<sup>81</sup>

Reverting to theories on coordination arrangements the Afghan coordinating bodies seem to fulfil the requirements outlined by Bennett (1995: 169) of independence from government, a functional secretariat and applying a national perspective, cover more than one sector or take on a representational. While the regional bodies might have less of a national perspective they certainly have taken on the task of representing both the NGO community towards government and other humanitarian agencies in that region, and thus fulfilling that requirement.

Reviewing the eight typologies of NGO coordination arrangements Bennett identifies, all of the five bodies can be termed as an umbrella organisation of NGOs. In addition ICC can be defined as a religious affiliation consortia, while NCB and SWABAC could be listed as a sub-regional networks of NGOs, indicating overlapping between the typologies. More interesting, though, is that one can argue that ANCB represent a ninth arrangement with their exclusive membership of Afghan NGOs, namely that of a national NGO consortia.

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<sup>81</sup> Among other products a range of T-shirts with different Afghanistan-related motives was put out for sale.

The various coordination functions Van Brabant suggests (see 3.4.2) seems also to be verified through the activities of the Afghan coordination bodies, though again to a varying degree. As for member-oriented functions they do all provide a degree of services to their members, but not all of them organise training. The information-focused functions are important features of all coordination arrangements, both as for situation and security updates, but the learning dimension seems to hold a lower priority. The absence of review discussions and common evaluations is striking, not least as one might argue that in a complex context as Afghanistan represent all NGOs could benefit from learning from own and others positive and negative experiences. As for programming several of the coordinating bodies have established a project database and agreed on sectoral standards, though this has not necessarily led to more collective planning. Turning to the task and target-oriented functions, as political analysis, collective representation and strategic management, these seem to be lower on the prioritisation list except for the collective position where the interests of the members, as a group, is highlighted.

In sum, the Afghan coordination bodies are weak at training, learning, common programming and collective NGO representation, all that seems necessary to form a more unified NGO approach but which might be lacking due to the specific Afghan context.

#### **6.2.9. A Divided NGO Coordination Community**

It would be impossible to miss a conspicuous lack of trust and cooperation between the coordinating bodies which have arisen for a number of historical, personal and professional reasons, and which fermented the daily working environment of the agencies. The situation had in 1999 further deteriorated as a result of the exclusion of the ANCB and ICC from international meetings, as well as disagreements within the groups on how best to relate to the Taliban authorities, towards which they had taken a less confrontational stand than ACBAR. Some Afghan NCB members in Herat felt that ACBAR had attempted an unfriendly takeover when they decided to establish themselves there in 1998, as the KEP had felt when both ACBAR and OCHA set up coordination arrangements in Kabul in 1995. And many expressed a feeling of being sidelined by ACBAR when this organisation was the only one to be invited to international coordination meetings and both Islamic and Afghan NGOs expressed a feeling of lack of respect for their work by the 'Westerners,' which they saw as dominating ACBAR, the UN agencies and the major donors (personal communication, 1999).

The introduction of the Principled Common Programming process, detailed below, was an incentive to try to establish one common NGO coordination mechanism favoured by the ACBAR Steering Committee in February 1998 (ACBAR 1998: 44). This was supported by the Director of OCHA, who argued for the benefit of having the UN system relate to one NGO coordinating body (personal communication, 1999). These initiatives led to a joint ACBAR, ANCB and ICC evaluation of the Afghan NGO coordinating bodies in May 1999 (Strand, Lander et al. 1999), and a following seminar in September the same year endorsed, in principle, the idea of forced joining into one coordination body where each specific NGO group retained a large degree of autonomy. The coordinating bodies, moreover, agreed on a process to

get the process moving (Strand, Leader et al. 1999: 83). Despite a promising start, and encouragement from donors and individuals, the negotiations broke down later that year, over minor details as one member of the task force later explained (personal communication, 2000) and despite the agencies maintaining their view that one common coordination body would be beneficial for the NGO community.

In hindsight it might be argued that the trust-building process in such a historically divided NGO community would require special attention and documented results through a step-by-step approach. In this case, there might have been a fear of a common solution being imposed by the 'Westerners' again, and the Islamic and Afghan NGOs demonstrated their freedom as NGOs by deciding not to join in a new and common coordination mechanism. One might suggest that the threat from the joint, UN-led Afghan Programming Body was not deemed so large that they regarded it as beneficial to give up their independence to a larger NGO body. A contributing factor might have been that both ICC and ANCB were represented in the APB, while SWABAC had secured a strong influence in the Kandahar Regional Coordination Body, and NCB was virtually closed down due to a lack of funds.

### 6.3. Coordination Between NGOs, Donors and UN Agencies

The development that has taken place in Afghanistan on the coordination of humanitarian assistance, especially since 1997, has brought about a much closer and more formalised interaction between the NGOs, the UN agencies and even the donors. Thus the NGO coordination efforts cannot be seen in isolation, but have to be reviewed within the common frame the NGOs have chosen to interact within, largely led by the United Nations.

The UN coordination efforts in Afghanistan were formalised as early as 1988, but the International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan, which took place on 21-22 January 1997 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan was the first large gathering of UN agencies, NGOs and donors involved in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan (OCHA 1997). The Forum recommended the establishment of a comprehensive strategy framework for national recovery, reconstruction and development and humanitarian relief, whereas the UN announced the appointment of a single coordinator for humanitarian as well as development activities for Afghanistan.

Debating coordination, the Forum concluded: '[C]oordination of assistance efforts is essential in order to set standards, to share information, to ensure cost efficiencies, to set priorities, to provide a mechanism for inter-action with local authorities and to assign roles and responsibilities.' While recognising that several coordinating mechanisms existed, '[N]evertheless, coordination is required at the overall level, where the UN can be a facilitator but should be able to demonstrate leadership, while respecting the mandates, independence and autonomy of each actor.'

The UN Strategic Framework (SF) for Afghanistan was thus presented on 15 September 1999 (UNCO 1998: 1) with an overarching goal to 'facilitate the transition from a state of international conflict to a just and sustainable peace through mutually reinforcing political and assistance initiatives', and to guide the activities

‘ideally of all external actors’ (UNCO, op. cit. 4). The SF laid down a number of principles to guide humanitarian activities,<sup>82</sup> and presented a set of operational modalities, although underlining that conditionality must be subordinated to the humanitarian imperative of saving lives and the right to receive humanitarian assistance.

As stated in the ‘Draft Strategic Framework for Afghanistan’ (UNCO 1998), ‘[T]he assumption informing the Strategic Framework process is that the sum of these products will provide the foundation for a peace-building strategy – encompassing both a political strategy and an international assistance strategy – which will be increasingly owned by the people of Afghanistan.’

### 6.3.1. Principled Common Programming

It was, however, recognised that a coordinated effort could not be limited to the United Nations organisations. Thus the donors, on their side, established the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) to back the process, while a small team of UN, World Bank and NGO employees prepared and presented in April 1998 a document termed ‘Making a reality of Principled Common Programming’, (UNCO 1998) where they explained ‘principled common programming’ as:

*It is a mechanism whereby assistance actors – including Afghans, the NGO community, the UN and donor governments – can work more effectively together in order to agree upon overall needs, programmes and policies. These must be informed by participatory need assessment and clear sectoral policies. The objective is to improve the collective impact of assistance on beneficiaries – the people of Afghanistan – in a timely, principled and resource efficient manner, and to contribute to broader efforts to achieve peace.*

The document was rooted in the 7 principles established by the SF, and furthermore proposed, on the management side, that the existing Afghan coordination arrangements would be rationalised and transformed into an Afghanistan Programming Board (APB)<sup>83</sup> at the national level and seven Regional Coordination

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<sup>82</sup> These principles were 1) Life-sustaining humanitarian assistance shall be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, universality, and neutrality, 2) Assistance shall be provided as part of an overall effort to achieve peace. 3) International assistance will be provided on the basis of need; it cannot be subjected to any form of discrimination, including of gender, 4) Rehabilitation and development assistance shall be provided only where it can be reasonably determined that no direct political or military advantages will accrue to the warring parties in Afghanistan, 5) Institution and capacity-building activities must advance human rights and will not seek to provide support to any presumptive state authority which does not fully subscribe to the principles contained in the founding instruments of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and International Humanitarian Law, 6) Assistance activities must be designed to ensure increased indigenous ownership at the village, community and national level and to build the country as a whole, 7) Assistance activities must attain high standards of transparency and accountability, and, must be appraised, monitored, measured and evaluated against clear policy and programming objectives.

<sup>83</sup> The mandate of the Afghanistan Programming Board was 1) To agree upon national assistance programming priorities; 2) To determine how principles and operational guidelines can be practically applied in the formulation of sectoral policies and assistance programmes; 3) To review and

Bodies (RCBs) at field level. Through these coordination mechanisms they envisaged (OCHA 1998: introduction) that the relief community would ‘address the many complex policy, operational and technical problems which are faced on a daily basis in a more structured, result oriented manner’, whereas ‘it will allow them to achieve greater policy clarity and programming efficiency, insight into the impact of their work, and better coordination.’ It was further envisaged that this would in the end reduce the time spent on coordination.

A similar number of UN agencies and NGOs should compose the RCB, donors with presence in that specific region could be members, and the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC should be invited to participate, respecting their unique mandate. To increase efficiency and reduce costs for the assistance community it was proposed to that a number of services should be made available for all relief actors (OCHA 1998: 9), such as:

- Communication and security facilities.
- Assistance with transfer of cash to the field.
- Access to use of vehicles.
- Meeting space.
- Information services (internet based by ProMis (2002)).

The Afghanistan Programming Board should have equal representation of UN agencies and NGOs, and, besides selected donor countries, be open to the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, UNSMA and the ICRC. The document was less clear on the role of the donors, though proposing that all donors be invited to the two biannual meetings, while only the past, present and future chairs of the Afghan Support Group should be invited to all meetings. As it later turned out, all donors requested to be represented at all meetings, thus constituting the largest group in the APB.

### **6.3.2. Experiences and Challenges for the NGO Community**

From autumn 1998 the SF and PCP processes did not developed as smoothly as hoped, for a large number of reasons. Most important was that all international staff were moved out of Afghanistan following US rocket attacks on alledged terrorist camps in August 1998 and then the UK and USA disallowing their citizens to travel to Afghanistan for security reasons (ACBAR 1998: 44). The result was that the PCP process was shifted out of Afghanistan to Pakistan, and was stalled until the beginning of 1999. But then also the APB, with its large number of participants, struggled to find a workable form and already by early 1999 NGOs were calling for a review of its function (Strand, Lander et.al. 1999). The UN agencies voluntarily reduced their number of board members, hoping in vain to be followed by the NGOs and the donors. There were complaints that the donors generally were not in a

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consolidate programmes submitted by RCBs; 4) To facilitate the preparation and launch of the Consolidated Appeal; 5) To manage the Common Programming core function, including the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

position to make any decisions before consulting their Ministries at home, which consequently slowed down any process.<sup>84</sup>

Another question that emerged was the selection of donor governments allowed into the Afghan Support Group and to meet at APB meetings. The Principled Common Programming document (OCHA 1998) mentions that the Afghan Support Group consists of 14 donors 'who have provided approximately 85% of the funds through the UN over the last year', though the document envisages the Afghan Programming Board 'to include all donor governments that put significant assistance funding into Afghanistan.' Muslim organisations then raised the concern that no Muslim countries were invited to either of these two coordination forums, as only 'like-minded' countries were to be included. If the criterion for funding through the UN was applied, the exclusion could be understandable as few Islamic countries had any major contribution channelled through the UN, but if 'significant assistance' is to be used as a measurer then it is difficult to understand why countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, or the OIC, were excluded from these coordination arrangements.

One of the initial intentions of such a coordination arrangement was to establish a Common Fund mechanism to allow for a stronger direction of the aid efforts, but that idea was opposed by the NGOs and turned down by the donors already in December 1997 (Atmar, Barakat et al. 1998). The NGOs feared that they would lose out funding-wise to the UN agencies, and donors feared their independence in selecting implementing agencies could be curtailed. The same concerns applied to the funding of the Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan, where NGOs were also invited to include their projects. UN figures from 1998 (OCHA 1998) reveal that of total donations of approximately US \$ 130 million, US \$ 53 millions (40.8 %) came in through the appeal, while US \$ 77 millions (59.2 %) was spent on projects outside of the Appeal. Thus, neither the NGOs nor the donors wished to be limited by a funding structure that could be used to regulate their humanitarian activities, especially not one directed by the United Nations.

From the outset of the SF and PCP process in 1997, the role of the authorities changed dramatically in Afghanistan, as the Taliban gained control of 80 % of the country and introduced countrywide strict and traditionalist Islamic legislation based on *Sharia*. Thus, a conflict on different levels emerged. One was the political arena, where there was a concern, especially raised by the UN and the donors, that formalised cooperation with the Taliban could be seen as *de facto* recognition of their government. Then came the humanitarian issues, where Taliban restrictions on female education and job opportunities and unequal access to health facilities were concerns for western NGOs and the UN, while the question of access to all groups inside the country and concern for upholding human rights were more widely agreed upon among all humanitarian actors. These realities caused an uneasy balancing act, where large differences emerged in the UN, NGO and donor communities on how to relate to 'presumptive authorities', and at what level it would be acceptable to engage in a dialogue (Leader 2000). The Taliban clearly demonstrated a willingness to put pressure on the humanitarian actors if these did not comply with instructions from

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<sup>84</sup> This was a recurring theme during interviews with NGO Directors for the evaluation of Afghan NGO coordinating bodies (Strand et. al. 1999)

the Ministries, as the ban on ACBAR from performing coordination activities illustrated.

Neither were the Taliban pleased that the UN and the NGOs, through the PCP, had established themselves, as expressed by the head of OCHA in September 1999, as a 'Ministry of Planning in coming' or as a 'Ministry of Planning in exile' (private communication, 1999). They thus signalled that they did not recognise the similar Ministry operated by the Taliban authorities, a stand that was underlined by the refusal to fund development of the functions of, as they termed it, 'presumptive authorities'.

For any kind of reform that includes such a larger number of actors there will ultimately be a need for a certain level of openness and trust if a coordination process is to stand a chance of succeeding. The PCP process intends to be both inclusive of all humanitarian actors and consensus oriented, where the actors were to be led by a set of principles and where the facilitation of the process was entrusted to OCHA and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator. This proved to be a difficult balancing act and by early 1999 it was recorded that many NGOs regard the PCP as a UN-driven process rather than a common one. The NGOs (Concerned NGOs 1999: 1) formulated their main concern to be that

*(...) given the diversity of opinions among donors, UN agencies and NGOs, the creation of an overly centralised Common Programming mechanism could result in collective inaction rather than action, and reduce the efforts of the international assistance community to the lowest common denominator.*

The NGOs suggest that '[P]rogramming must recognise the different identities, mandates and *modus operandi* of donors, the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross, and play to their respective strengths (ibid.).' Their fear of being forcibly coordinated by the UN was demonstrated by their view of what Common Programming should not be, namely a centralised funding mechanism; a centralised project approval board; a centralised monitoring and evaluation unit; and a monopoly on contact with the Afghan authorities by one organisation or class of organisations.

A further point of worry was to what extent the various UN agencies wished to subscribe to such a coordination arrangement. Michael Keating (1998), having working with OCHA in Islamabad, elaborates his concern, stating:

*But ironically, the greatest resistance to the proposals being made in the Strategic Framework will probably be from within the UN. Despite the operational flexibility that many UN agencies have shown inside Afghanistan, most are notoriously protective of their mandates, resistance to fundamental changes, and suspicious of predatory behaviour by their sister agencies.*

When the NGOs' reluctance to coordinate among themselves was added, and both UN agencies and NGOs were reluctant to be coordinated by the RCOs in the field, the importance of the APB and the RCB structure boiled down to a more formal information sharing mechanism where the real power was vested in the Afghan Support Group. Here the donors could among themselves 'do some arm-wrestling' to have the agencies toe the line, as it was expressed by a major donor (personal communication, 2001).



It is clear that the PCP excludes a development approach, as the national government was not included in the process at a national level, nor involved in the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). And as projects seen to build governmental capacities were to be avoided, it consequently made a transition from relief assistance to development programmes more difficult. But the problem did not stop there, as one of the principles was that rehabilitation and development assistance ‘shall be provided only where it can be reasonably determined that no direct political or military advantage will accrue to the warring parties.’

Donors interpreted this principle in different ways. One NGO Director (private communication, 1999) indicated that the UK Department for International Development (DfID) denied them funding in May 1999 on the argument that support for the resettlement of returnees from Iran in western Afghanistan could ease the pressure on the Taliban. Keating (1998) articulates another concern when he suggests:

*But what about giving the hungry the means – an income, perhaps some tools, or help with irrigation, or seed and fertiliser – to reduce their dependency upon handouts? Is it even ethical, whatever the political hue of the authorities, to limit aid to humanitarian assistance when it is clear that rehabilitation work is both possible and arguably essential to preventing hundreds of thousands of Afghans from becoming beggars on their own land?*

It could therefore be observed that the PCP was not implemented with the intended flexibility and was not rooted in a concern that the delivery of life-saving assistance should not be done in a way that would undermine future development projects. Rather, as several NGOs suggested and the CAP budget confirmed, by focusing on war and conflict it maintained an emergency relief angle on the humanitarian operation, rather than addressing the underlying causes of the problems facing Afghans in general and forced migrants in particular (for a discussion on the consequences this holds for the longer-term needs of the Afghan population see Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 46-49).

### **6.3.3. SF and PCP Coordination Arrangements**

Generally speaking, the Strategic Framework and the Principled Common Programming process for Afghanistan offer some lessons in respect of how difficult such an interagency process might be:

- Different humanitarian actors are guided by different mandates and applied different work methods.
- Establishing the necessary level of trust is difficult if such a coordination mechanism is seen as being ‘owned’ or run by only one party; or one group, or members of one group, are in a position to veto all others if a proposal is not in their favour.
- Proceedings (especially for funding) and budgets are not open, available and transparent to all parties.
- There is not one set of a commonly agreed humanitarian principles to guide the assistance efforts.

However, even if these criteria are met, any coordinated effort can easily be overrun by donor agencies that do not even need to veto anything; they only need to direct funding in accordance with their own interests. With the establishment of the Afghan Support Group, the most influential Western donors formed their own coordination system outside the common coordination mechanisms.

At the end it seems pertinent to quote from the only review that has been undertaken of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, namely the one conducted by Duffield, Gossman et al. (2001). In a rather critical examination, where the ‘securitisation’ role of aid is questioned (2001: 3),<sup>85</sup> they critiquing the ‘failed state notion,’ which they see as a justification for the use of aid ‘as a tool for conflict resolution, social reconstruction and behavioural change’, or in short ‘social engineering’. They further point out that the SF has not linked, as envisaged, the humanitarian and political strategies for Afghanistan; they find a division in the aid community between ‘development/humanitarian’ and ‘political’ groupings, a situation they believe the Taliban were able to exploit in their own interest. In short, Duffield et. al argue that the changes the SF was expected to bring to the way in which assistance was planned and funded were prevented by ‘the diverse institutions, political and assistance agendas of both agencies and donors’, while ‘[A] particular factor here has been the resistance of the main UN agencies, the UN cannot expect to lead if it cannot coordinate itself’ (Duffield, Gossman et al. 2001: 5).

They furthermore raise a concern that the SF has failed the intention of promoting and protecting human rights, particularly of refugees, as there ‘is little agreement on who should be doing it and how’, but rather that it has led to a further division over human rights issues within the UN system, with the UNHCR having failed to enforce its own protection mandate for Afghans (Duffield, Gossman et al. 2001: 6). Their final conclusion is that the SF has not achieved the objective of coherence between political, human rights and assistance interventions, although, as they observe, ‘[T]his failing is not primarily managerial or organisational, rather it is that the relationship between aid and politics represents a major unresolved and inadequately analysed issue between donor governments’ (ibid.).

One might then assume that the critique would have been similar, but even more critical of the coordination role of the UN, if the PCP had been up for review as well, although, if building on the conclusions drawn by Duffield, Gossman et al. one might suggest that it was not as much the coordination structures, the APB and the RCBs, and the involvement of all humanitarian actors that was the main problem. Rather, it was the underlying idea of involving all humanitarian agencies in a strategy set to encompass both political and humanitarian goals and a rights- and a needs-based approach (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 41-42) in more of an enforced manner.

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<sup>85</sup> Defined as the situation where ‘[A]id takes on a security role insofar as its activities are thought to promote peace and stability through contributing to global security’.

#### 6.4. Coordination Bodies and Forced Migrants

It is interesting to note that in such a large NGO community as the Afghan one, with several NGOs dedicated to assisting and protecting forced migrants, and where there has been such overwhelming attention paid to Afghan refugees and IDPs, there has nevertheless been comparatively little focus on this particular group within the NGO coordinating bodies. No dedicated committees of sub-groups were established within any of the coordination arrangements, not even the wider APB, tasked to address forced migration issues. This stands in stark contrast to the international attention, and apprehension, devoted to accepting the international 'Code of Conduct, and to disseminating and abiding by the guidelines drawn up by the Sphere project. None of these standards that could have improved the assistance to forced migrants appears by late 1999 to have filtered down to the NGO coordination bodies or been raised by NGOs which are members of international coordination arrangements such as ICVA or InterAction. More worrying is the fact that none of the same coordination bodies seems to have taken any interest in adopting, or even discussing, the guiding principles that Dr. Francis Deng developed for providing protection and assistance to IDPs and which was published and disseminated by OCHA (1999). For comparison, a small coordination body as the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA) in Sri Lanka both had a special task force to adapt the universal guidelines to the Sri Lankan context, and also worked out a special publication to inform all NGOs, UN agencies as well as the Sri Lankan Government on the rights of IDPs (CHA, private communication, 2001).

Moreover, and illustrative of the Afghan NGO community, is the fact that only a very few national NGOs are engaged in human rights and advocacy work despite the massive atrocities against the civil population that have taken place over the years. Likewise, the coordination bodies have shied away from engaging themselves in such issues or establishing dedicated sub-committees for the promotion of human rights or advocacy on behalf of the Afghan population. This stands in stark contrast to the willingness of the NGO coordinating bodies to confront any given Afghan authority when they feared for their own independence or restrictions that might impose regulations upon them. Likewise, no references were found to NGOs or NGO coordinating bodies bringing advocacy or protection issues to the attention of the international NGO coordination bodies, or even taking the opportunity to raise such issues for debate in the Afghan NGO environment when such discussions were ongoing in the international bodies and policies formed that eventually could influence the humanitarian work in Afghanistan.

That being stated, the efforts undertaken by the late 1980s and early 1990s to establish common standards among NGOs operating in Afghanistan were largely welcome and would have had a positive impact on assistance provision to forced migrants. But these were mainly technical standards – on the amount of medicine to be allocated to which kinds of health personnel, or what salary teachers should receive – and less on what might have been more controversial issues, such as protection of the rights of the displaced to seek refugee in neighbouring countries.

The author was not able, either, to identify any attempts by these NGO coordination bodies actively to involve or include any forced migrants in their deliberations or even systematically consult them before issues were discussed at coordination

meetings or statements released. The times when there has been direct contact between forced migrants and coordination bodies seem to have been limited to instances where there were complaints about the work of specific NGOs or demands for assistance for specific areas. Such requests have then been distributed to NGO members, leaving it largely for single agencies to respond. However, this does not fully exclude the forced migrants from the coordinating bodies, as many of the Afghan staff members of the NGO, and even the coordinating bodies, would be forced migrants, although mainly from the small group of highly educated and mostly urban Afghans.

One must thus conclude that the NGO coordination bodies, although acting as a welcome service and information providers for NGOs supporting forced migrants, have only to a very limited extent actively engaged themselves in forced migration issues or actively sought the views of this group of their intended beneficiaries. However, two notable exceptions were recorded that might confirm the thesis that closeness to the intended beneficiaries is important. In Herat in 1999 the NGO community was the first to raise the alarm over a sudden increase in repatriation figures to western parts of Afghanistan. This took place at a NCB meeting in April, where information was exchanged between NGOs and the UN regional coordinator, who was an observer at the meeting, and the latter was requested to investigate with their offices in Iran and Islamabad if this was part of a larger forced resending of Afghans from Iran, and in that case on what scale this could be expected to be. Their worry was their ability to assist those returning, and to be able to raise enough financial resources to match the proportion of the returnees. However, both in this instance and later on in 2001, when there was a large influx of drought-related IDPs into Herat (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 56), the UN agencies were extremely slow to respond both with information and with support.<sup>86</sup> A similar reaction from the humanitarian agencies was furthermore recorded in Kandahar in late 2000 and 2001 as agencies witnessed a massive influx of internally displaced people following the spread of the drought. Here the agencies, after having provided their Pakistan offices with a number of warnings of the situation (RCO Kandahar 2000; 2000) without much reaction, brought the issue up directly with visiting donor and UN delegations, which in the end resulted in funding from the World Food Programme (Ofstad, Strand et. al, op.cit. Annex 5: 13). In these cases the local NGOs, and in the latter case the Regional Coordination Board, acted upon the situation witnessed in the field, while the view expressed by NGOs both in Herat and Kandahar (personal communication, 1999 and 2001) was that national coordination arrangements had failed in their attempts to provide a rapid response.

Thus, it is tempting to suggest that in general the coordination bodies have tended more to the practical needs of their member NGOs, for these to be able to continue their operations, than to the specific needs of the forced migrants, as defined by this particular group, whose cases have been left for single NGOs to present or respond to. The collectiveness of an organisational arrangement such as a coordination body does not seem to have added a collective effort in support of forced migrants.

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<sup>86</sup> As for 1999, agencies were finally referred to UNHCR in Geneva, as repatriation was linked to negotiations involving the UNHCR in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, while in 2000 the process was delayed by agencies discussing 'pull and push' factors at headquarter level in Islamabad, where they could not agree on a common strategy (UN coordinator, personal communication, 2001).

## 6.5. Conclusion

The Afghan NGO community is very diverse, and some of the largest and most influential NGOs have supported Afghan forced migrants since the early 1980s and should thus be genuinely well placed to cater for their needs and protect their interests. However, the NGO community is sharply divided between Western, Afghan and Islamic NGOs, and these three groups have only had very limited contact and interaction with each other. Competition for funding and drawing the attention of the larger donors seems to have overshadowed a will to collaborate in the interests of those they all proclaim their intention of supporting. Furthermore, as previously documented by the author (Strand 1998: 68-83), Western and Islamic NGOs share a history of mistrust of each other, partly based on accusations of involvement in missionary activities, lack of contact at both the organisational and personal level and a difference in operational approaches that has led to suspicions of 'the other' being engaged in Afghanistan on religious/political rather than humanitarian grounds. More effort has gone into keeping separate and parallel relief and rehabilitation projects and programmes than in forging joint assessments or coordinated efforts to support forced migrants, or advocate their protection or their rights. The majority of the Afghan NGOs established from 1988 onwards ended up as contractors for the UN and international NGOs rather than developing a more genuine and community/grassroots-based foundation for their activities.

This division is then clearly reflected in the coordination arrangement, with separate organisations for Afghan, Western and Islamic NGOs, which have not been able to reconcile their differences and join their forces in a number of initiatives or an expressed willingness to do so. It appears that each group rather prefers to continue on its own despite the fact that each of them have been struggling to secure enough income to maintain its operation and generally acknowledges that the NGO community, at large, would have benefited from having joint representation in relation to the UN, the donors and the Afghan authority. However, a further division is also noted among NGO coordination bodies, namely that of exile and Afghan-based NGOs. The largest NGOs (and all UN agencies) have kept their headquarters in Pakistan even after the end of the Afghan war and civil war, and have thus maintained a certain distance from those they wish to assist. Security regulations and a ban on travel for certain nationalities have further restricted contact with forced migrants inside Afghanistan. At the same time, Afghan NGOs have all been present inside Afghanistan and have been instrumental in forming the two regional coordination bodies, based in the two of three main centres of internal displacement over recent years, Kandahar and Herat.

On the one hand, and given the overall assumption that coordination will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance, one must assume that the lack of a coordinated effort between NGOs and between NGO coordinating bodies in Afghanistan has caused overlapping and wastage of resources, and a number of missed opportunities and thus less benefit for the forced migrants.

On the other side, it could actually be argued that the extent of NGO coordination witnessed in Afghanistan might actually be the realistic degree to which NGOs are willing to forge a coordinated approach at a national level, given the lack of a representative government that could have enforced a larger degree of coordination

between all humanitarian actors. Provided that NGO coordination is regarded, at least by the NGOs, as being a voluntary act and that it is up to each NGO to seek membership in a coordination body of their own liking, one might assume that there would be a range of coordination arrangements in any larger complex political emergency if one coordination body is not able to include and respect the interests of the majority of the NGOs. However, the findings from Sri Lanka and Indonesia, countries with functional and rather authoritarian governments, indicate that the division in NGO coordination arrangements is not only found in complex political emergencies, but is more of an international phenomenon in countries in conflict, where NGOs might oppose government policy or represent groups in opposition to the government.

It is further notable that the more uniform coordination arrangement tested out in Afghanistan through the PCP process has not yielded the results of a more unified and coordinated humanitarian approach, as some had envisaged. What has emerged, however, and despite a lack of inclusion of important Muslim donors, is a formalised system for information exchange and consensus building. '[W]e have all learned each other better to know' was a comment of one of the most senior NGO Directors in 2000 (private communication). This, again, might confirm how impossible it is to enforce coordination on such a diverse group of humanitarian agencies. However, a noteworthy contrast is the general acceptance of the much more strictly enforced coordination arrangement that is established for Humanitarian Mine Action, where Afghan and national NGOs have agreed to be coordinated by a UN lead agency, the OCHA, which is generally regarded as one of the world's most successful demining operations. But, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it appears that there has been almost no contact between the overall coordination arrangement and the HMA coordination, and the latter is seen as a technical task to be performed with military precision.

Moreover, as argued above, while the forced migrants certainly will have benefited from the more general coordination that has taken place and the degree to which agencies have had knowledge about each other's operations and have been able to establish a set of common norms, NGO coordination at a national level seems to have fallen short of including the specific interests of forced migrants or promoting and meeting what might have been their specific needs in their given situation.

With the theoretical assumption in mind that NGO coordination might be best catered for at a local level, between agencies in daily contact with and directly involved in providing assistance for forced migrants, there is a need to examine whether such an Afghan-based arrangement for Afghanistan has been better at securing the interests of the forced migrants. A further need is to review the relationship and interaction between NGOs and a local community in areas of Afghanistan with a high degree of forced migration and, likewise, a degree of displacement and voluntary and forced return. It is necessary also to record, in the field, the views held by the intended beneficiaries of the NGOs and their coordination arrangements. And likewise, how the NGOs operating in the field view the benefit to them of being members of a local and a national coordination body, and if they favour involving forced migrants in their decision-making processes.

## 7. Fieldwork Findings from Afghanistan

This Chapter will present the results of the field research in villages in the outskirts of Herat city in Afghanistan, conducted as outlined in the Chapter on field methodology. The Chapter starts with a presentation of contextual issues in the Herat region, including a review of war and migration history. Attention is then drawn to the two villages where the field research was undertaken, followed by a comparison of these with national figures to establish that these villages seem rather representative of an average Afghan village.

The history and extent of forced migration in the Herat region and in the selected villages are then examined, leading into a questioning of the importance of the *hijra* concept.

The empirical field findings are then presented in detail, including the migration patterns to and from Iran, how the humanitarian needs of the forced migrants had been met as they left and returned and how little timely this assistance had been. The villagers' knowledge about NGOs is presented, as is their understanding of the relationship between the NGOs and the *shura*, seeing the latter as a conflict resolution body rather than a development actor. This is then followed by a comparison of empirical findings with migration theory, showing how complicated the migration circle is and how difficult it is to differentiate between forced and voluntary migrants.

A comparison is then made between three NGOs on how they assessed the resources and needs of their intended beneficiaries. The result is then compared with national findings, confirming that most needs assessments are made on behalf of the population rather than with their active involvement, and that intra-NGO competition for funding makes many NGOs reluctant to share information on the needs of the population.

### 7.1. Contextual Issues in the Herat Region

Herat is located in the north-west of Afghanistan, close to the border with Iran and Turkmenistan, and has a long history as a regional cultural, learning and trade centre. Most well known are the Blue Mosque, the ancient fortress, water reservoirs and irrigation systems, and not least the high ceramic-clad towers that travellers notice first (Dupree 1976; Najimi 1988).

Trade has certainly played a major role in the development of the city and most of the commercial goods imported from and through Iran and Turkmenistan, for both the Afghan and Pakistani markets, are taxed here, providing valuable income for the

local authorities. Roads coming in from Turgundi on the Turkmen border and Islam Qala on the Iranian border are linked up to the main southern road in Afghanistan, providing access to major cities such as Kandahar, Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad. Herat airport and the airbase at Shindan south of Herat are important military installations, used to control the Afghan borders.

Heratis are regarded as the most peaceful of the Afghans, but that image was shattered in 1978 when a revolt was staged against the new communist government troops from within the Afghan military base in Herat by military officers, of whom Ismael Khan was the most well known.<sup>87</sup> The revolt was short-lived, and effectively crushed by massive air strikes and military operations that killed a large but still unknown number of civilians. A story told by an informant in Izhaq Suleiman village details his experience of this rebellion (see Box 22), which led to massive retaliation and the consequent mass migration to Iran, not least following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

In March 1978 - that coincides with our calendar ~ 24<sup>th</sup> of Hoot 1357 (1978) ~ I was in Herat city. I was a truck driver and drove between the city and Gulran district, regularly.

It was a historic day for our province. People started a public revolt against the communist regime. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of Hoot, while the revolt was starting, I was also among other people who rushed into the most important military division. It was the 17<sup>th</sup> military division of the Ministry of Defence of the communist regime in Herat and called Farqa-e-17.

Finally the revolt succeeded in capturing the military division. We strongly defended and resisted, but with too many casualties and losses. People were not afraid of dying, because people believed that if they die for such a matter then it will have a greater reward by the almighty God. Their names are Martyrs. If they are not killed and remained alive, then in Islam they are people who have fought successfully against infidels and it is a title of honour to call them *ghazi*.

While we captured the military division, we controlled it for 3 days, then we left the division and fled to the mountains. A number of rebellious soldiers of the artillery branch of the division also joined us. I became commander of 20 people and fled to the mountains.

We passed 13 months in the Khowsh Rabat mountains of Kushk district. Then we went to Turbat-e-Jaam, Iran.

**Box 22: Herat War History**

**Source:** Interview Af-S607, 03.05.1999

The *mujahideen* then moved their bases to Iran, from where they staged military operations into the Herat region with financial and military support from Iran and Pakistan. This guerrilla war again led to massive retaliation from the Soviet and Afghan army, not least against those villages housing the *mujahideen* and this increased the migration flow towards Iran. While refugees coming to Pakistan were

<sup>87</sup> Ismael Khan was a member of Jamiate-e-Islami, and became the first Governor of Herat following the Soviet withdrawal, calling himself the Emir of Herat. He was later arrested by the Taliban, managed to escape and reinstalled himself as Emir in Herat by late 2001.



aided by international NGOs and UN agencies, these were absent in Iran. Consequently, Iran did not establish refugee camps but rather issued Green Cards to the Afghan refugees; these allowed them access to subsidised food, free education and health facilities. However, the forced migrants themselves had to find lodging and seek employment to provide their daily needs.

Given its distance from Pakistan, where most NGOs had their base, very few NGOs ventured to Herat during the war years, and only the largest and best-connected commanders made their way to Pakistan to seek support. Given the limited number of international NGO personnel that travelled to Herat (which necessitates a dangerous and lengthy journey, see Lindgren (1989)), the area received far less humanitarian assistance than provinces closer to Pakistan. Even after the fall of the Afghan government in 1992 relatively few NGOs operated from Herat, while ICRC had a rather large mission there and the major UN agencies were also present.

A reasons for an NGO presence in Herat was the large number of refugees returning from Iran through Herat from 1992 onwards, many temporarily settling in the city before travelling on towards their home areas. The number increased when the internal fighting erupted in Kabul in 1993 and many fled to safety in Herat or were stranded there as Iran closed its border. This even included a small number of refugees from Tajikistan, fleeing the civil war.<sup>88</sup> The fighting between the Taliban and forces of the Northern Alliance in Bagdhis Province then caused a major influx of IDPs to Herat from 1997 onwards, and the drought that hit the Northern and Central regions in 1998 led a large number of families to seek shelter in the IDP camps in Herat from early 2000 (WFP 2000). Whilst the number of IDPs was rather low when the fieldwork started in April 1999, the influx of returnees from Iran increased dramatically as the Iranian government announced that Afghan refugees had to return and asked them to do so voluntarily, before they were expelled (UNHCR 2000).

Given their remoteness from the national NGO scene, the Herat-based NGOs decided to establish their own local coordination arrangement in 1995, the NGOs' Coordination Body (NCB). At first NCB was just an informal meetings point for NGOs, but was later formalised through election of a Board and employment of a coordinator to organise and record meetings. When ACBAR in 1998 decided to establish themselves in Herat this caused strong resentment among several NGOs. They complained that they had not been consulted in advance; nor did they see the need for two coordination bodies in Herat. Many NGOs holding ACBAR membership were actually members of the NCB. However, when the Taliban forced ACBAR to close down their Herat operation, the NCB and the local ACBAR employees reached a pragmatic co-habitation agreement to secure the interests of both organisations. Even if funding for the NCB ended in early 1999 they retained the NCB name on the common coordination activities to reduce the possibility of interference from the Taliban. With the introduction of a common Regional Coordinating Body the need for a local coordination mechanism was reduced, although in early 1999, due to the withdrawal of expatriate UN staff, NCB/ACBAR still had an important role to play.

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<sup>88</sup> The author met with several refugee families from Tajikistan during the fieldwork, and these did not dare return to Tajikistan due to fear of persecution.

### 7.1.1. The Izhaq Suleiman and Sara-e-Nau Villages

The main fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in Izhaq Suleiman village, with 51 interviews being conducted by Norwegian researchers. In addition, Afghan male surveyors undertook a control survey of 13 interviews in one part of Izhaq Suleiman village, termed a *mahalla*, and 18 interviews in the neighbouring Sara-e-Nau village.

Izhaq Suleiman village is located just south of the main road between Herat and the Iranian border, 14 km from Herat, which is the main marketplace, and close to an Afghan Army base. The village consists of mud houses of different sizes, grouped in 10 *mahallas* named after the mosque of that neighbourhood, with an estimated 4410 inhabitants.<sup>89</sup> The picture in Box 23 illustrates a typical *mahalla* layout.



**Box 23:** Part of Izhaq Suleiman Village

*Source:* Author, 2003

While there are mountains and grazing areas to the north of the village, a number of smaller villages are located in other directions. Many of these share the same water resources as Izhaq Suleiman village, an ancient irrigation canal derived from the Hari Rud River, whose water flow is largely influenced by seasonal variations. There was a general complaint that the amount of water for distribution within the village had been reduced over recent years, as more villagers were using more water. The village had also recently been hit by flash floods due to the increased cutting of vegetation and trees. The proximity of the Iranian labour and trade market had caused a high degree of work migration and trade relations, based on centuries of common cultural and linguistic traditions within the ancient Khorasan region.

The village can therefore track its history back several hundred years, and is an ethnic melting pot due to migration, settlement of nomads, patterns of land rent and inter-ethnic marriages (for the issue of land ownership and use, see Grønhaug (1978)). While the whole area surrounding Herat was heavily bombed following the army uprising, different *mujahideen* groups continued to carry out armed attacks on the nearby military base from Izhaq Suleiman village, which subsequently led to shelling of the village. Not only were parts of the village destroyed by these attacks, and people killed, but minefields laid out around the village caused a further security risk for the villagers.

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<sup>89</sup> These figures are based on family numbers established through interviews with key informants at the *mahalla* level; these were then multiplied by 7, being the average family size based on systematic household data from 27 of the households.

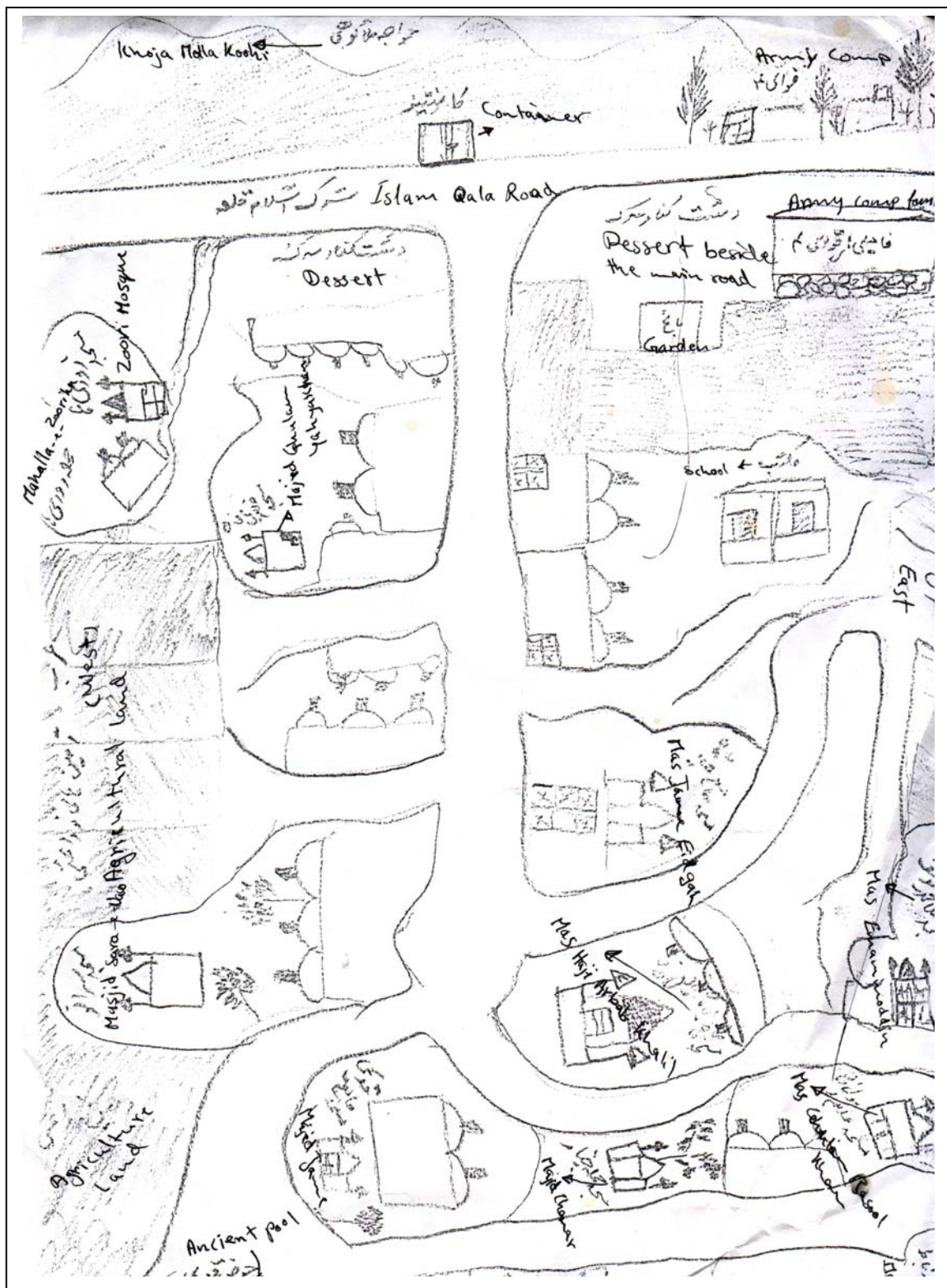
From the interviews it emerged that the villagers were divided in their support for, or at least collaboration with, both the government and the *mujahideen*. Many villagers took a pragmatic approach to survival, trading with the military base while housing and feeding the *mujahideen* groups when these needed shelter. What caused more upheaval in the village was land reform, which redistributed agricultural land to the poorest segment of the population, and which consequently was reversed when the communist government was overthrown.

Central in the village administration was the *arbab*, as a middleman between the villagers and the government, but there was also a tradition of calling for a *shura* within the village when a problem needed to be sorted out. The *shura*, however, was granted larger responsibility from 1993 onwards as villagers explained that Emir Ismael Khan refused to be involved in village conflicts, and ordered the *shura* to solve such disputes. From then on the village *shura* assumed a more formalised role, although it did not replace the position of the *arbab*.

Sara-e-Nau village, which is located south of Izhaq Suleiman, was divided into four *mahallas*, which, according to the *arbab*, have about 360 families. The survey identifies a typical variety of ethnic groups and estimates that about 35 % of the population are *Shia* Muslims, with a majority earning their income from agricultural production and trade in agricultural produce in the Herat market. According to a report of the Survey team a majority of the villagers were refugees in Iran between 1978 and 1992. During the war that was fought in the village almost all the houses were destroyed, of which 65 % were rebuilt by May 1999. As the surveyors conclude in their report (Afghan Survey Team 1999), '[T]he refugee experience led to strengthened contacts with, and knowledge about the Iranian labour market. Presently there is a high degree of labour migration, additional income from Iran is an important part of the household economy for many farmers living in Sara-e-Nau.'

The drawing of Izhaq Suleiman village made by a mine awareness teacher presented below in box 24 shows the division of the village into separate *mahallas*, each with a separate mosque. The village is surrounded by agricultural land while the area above the main road between Herat and the Iranian border is mainly used for animal grazing. The army base that led the village to end up as a frontline between the Afghan military and the *mujahideen* is found up to the right. Minefields are not indicated here but there were several belts of both anti personnel and anti tank mines laid out to protect the army base from attack.

Noted could also be the container at the road junction that served as a workshop for the 'punctureman' and the mill at the lower end of the village. Those working in these two locations had a very detailed overview over village activities, trade and interrelations with Herat city, Iran and the neighbouring villages.



**Box 24:** *Map of Izhaq Suleiman Village*

**Source:** Abdul Khalik, 1999

### 7.1.2. Comparison with National Figures

Although there is no definitive and reliable data on Afghanistan in general, some commonly agreed general characteristics can be used as a comparison of how representative, in an Afghan context, the selected villages are. There is agreement that a majority of Afghans live in rural areas, secure their income from agricultural activities and have a very low literacy level, especially among women. There is a high degree of migration, externally and internally, an average family size of seven, and an ethnic and religious mix, with *Pashtuns* forming the largest ethnic group and *Sunni* Islam being the dominant religious sect.

A review of Izhaq Suleiman and Sara-e-Nau villages confirms that these figures match most of the national figures, although with some regional variations. The vast majority of the interviewed villagers, 49 %, derived their main income from agriculture, although with an additional range of labourers, small businessmen and those earning an income from animal husbandry adding a diversity that one might expect in a village with a potential trade and labour market in the nearby town. The fact that 25 interviews are with women, or about 22 % of those interviewed, adds an important diversity to the findings.

However, from the interviews it is clear that a division emerges between the villages concerning their key agricultural activities, with animal husbandry emerging as the dominant occupation in one *mahalla* of Izhaq Suleiman. This variation might be explained by the fact that groups of nomads, possibly even due to the war, established themselves over time more permanently in this area, due to its proximity to a slaughterhouse, the *mashlek*, built by the end of the 1970s.

Turning to ethnicity, the largest ethnic group in these villages is the *Pashtuns*, consisting of different tribes, with *Tajiks* forming the second largest group and *Turkmens* the third, in addition to a range of smaller recorded ethnic groups. The only deviation from national figures here is the high number of *Turkmens*, which can be explained by the proximity to Turkmenistan. As for religious diversity, the vast majority declared themselves to be *Sunni* Muslims; a smaller number indicated that they were *Shia* Muslims, although fewer than the national average, which stands at 15 %.

Of the 82 interviewed only 21 declared that they were literate, or 25.6 % of the total, and of these only 3 were women (out of 18). The first is in line with the national average, while for women the score is higher than the average. This variation might be explained by the rather small sample interviewed and the fact that access to education was more easily available for Afghan refugees to Iran. The average number of children of those interviewed is 4.9, which is close to the average 5, the estimate used by humanitarian agencies.

In conclusion, with some variables attributed to local variations, which might be found in any given part of Afghanistan, the cluster of villages selected for interviews and surveys must be regarded as representative of an average Afghan village. Thus any findings might hold some validity at a national level if replicated in a larger number of areas throughout the country.

## 7.2. Forced Migration from Herat

The fieldwork documented a very diverse pattern of migration, return, resettlement and renewed migration, with blurred lines between what might be practically and legally regarded as forced and voluntary migration. Also influencing decisions to flee and return to Afghanistan was the concept of *hijra*, although it appears that this Islamic concept might have held less validity for Afghans fleeing to Iran than for those seeking refuge in Pakistan.

### 7.2.1. Migration History

As indicated above, people felt forced to leave the Herat region following massive retaliation against the city and neighbouring villages in 1978. All those interviewed who left during the late 1970s and early 1980s gave war-related reasons or fear of conscription or arrest as the reason for their flight. However, people still left for Iran during the 1990s, and those who did so cited economic problems or a lack of job opportunities in the Herat region as their motivation for leaving. Probably due to the pre-war work migration and trade contact with Iran, as many as 50 % of those interviewed who had fled to Iran indicated that other family members had been at their refugee destination beforehand, and of these close to 1 in 5 confirmed that family members were already residing in Iran when they fled their village.

Focusing on the flight, it is notable that as many as 85 % of the forced migrants fleeing to Iran left with members of their family, while only 12 families out of 52 said that they left on their own. Thus, the large majority of forced migrants from these villages fled within a larger group of families, either from the same village or with relatives. This would indicate that the forced migration was based on a group decision, or at least a family decision, as only 2 informants explained that they had travelled on their own. While there is a certain diversity in responses obtained from male and female informers on several issues, not least on the priority of humanitarian needs, there is a striking similarity between both genders when it comes to decision making: it is the men who decide within the family.

Equally interesting is the fact that among those responding to the question of how they financed their travel to Iran, only 23 % had spent their own funds, while the remainder had either sold livestock (34 %), sold belongings (11 %) or borrowed money (32 %). This indicates that not only was the flight well planned, but considerable time was spent before the departure on selling property or borrowing money to finance the journey.

However, with such massive flight from the region it is of interest to seek information as to why quite a few stayed on. The eleven non-migrants responding to the survey provided three different explanations for staying behind. The first related to their financial situation, either being so poor that they could not afford the flight (4), ‘... even I did not have the fare for my trip to leave the area’ (Af-S610) or having an opportunity for securing a viable economic income at home (1) ‘[I] had a truck and worked as stone bearer. I had normal income’ (Af-S609). The second was family related, where they had to care for others staying behind (3) ‘[I] was here alone with my father and with no big brother to look after my family’ (Af-PR519), or

being so young (1) that parents decided they should not leave. The third reason was more ideological, based on a wish to support the *mujahideen* (1) [I]intended to serve those mujahideen who had committee in our village because they were freedom fighters (Af-S614) or to defend their homeland (1) [I]love my country very much, so I preferred to death rather than going abroad' (Af-S619).

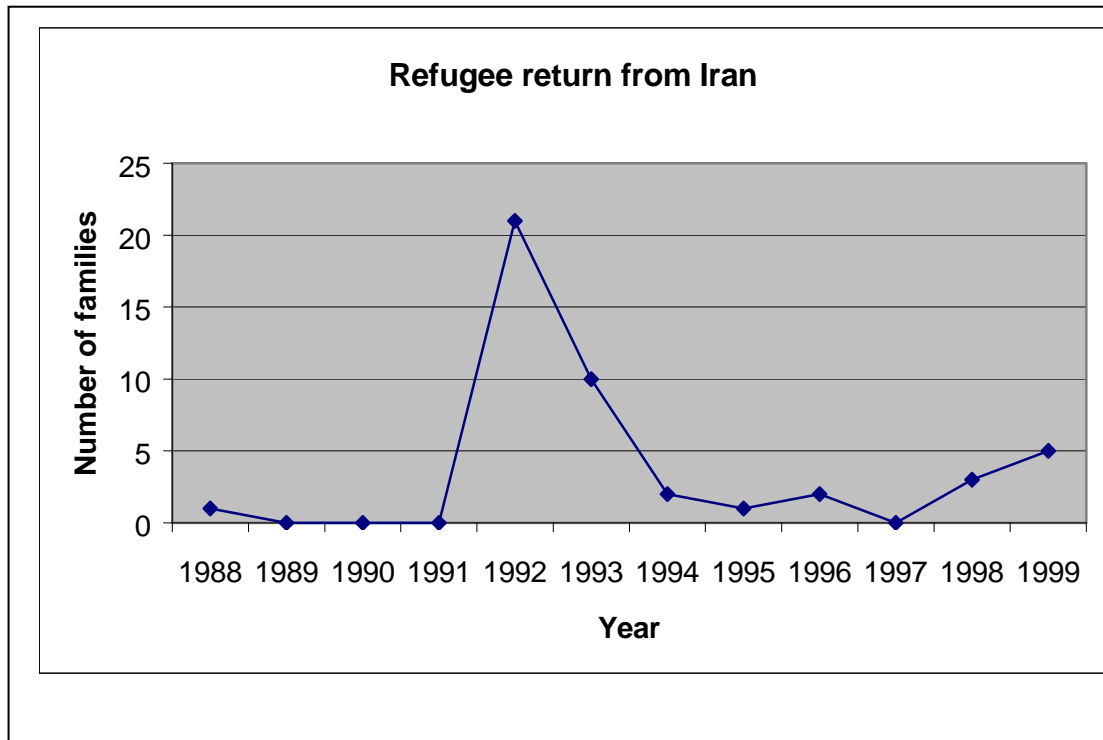
Interviews and surveys further document that while in exile in Iran 69 % of the forced migrants moved once, while 31 % moved twice or more frequently. This could be attributable to the fact that no refugee camps were established for the Afghan refugees, nor any special assistance schemes. Of those interviewed 64 % indicated that they had been provided with a green card and thus governmental assistance, while a few reported that they had been assisted by *mujahideen* parties, their neighbours or the UN on the way back; but none had experienced any NGO assistance while in exile.

This pattern of inclusion of refugees into the host community forced migrants to move to places where they could secure an income through labour or business. Furthermore, as no other safety net was in place, keeping in touch with and close to their relatives, as almost 95 % did, became of the upmost importance, not least because the labour market was relatively unstable, often with only seasonal or black market work and day-labour work available for able-bodied men, from which 86 % of those interviewed generated income for their families. While women indicated that they engaged in home-based industries, such as shelling pistachio nuts, only 4 % of the informants were earning an income from business.

It is interesting to note that Afghan forced migrants not only retained close contact with other family members in Iran, but 88 % stressed that they were also regularly updated on the situation in their home village. This was achieved through visits paid by family members, during which many explained that they participated in military activities on the side of the *mujahideen*, through letters or cassettes with messages, or news from villagers who moved into Iran or travelled back and forth. As a result, the majority of Afghan forced migrants were well informed about the situation in their home villages and the status of their homes and property.

A massive repatriation process took place during 1992 and 1993, when 67 % of the interviewed returned (see diagram below in Box 25), of which a majority (88 %) returned with their family members. As many as 65 % of these mentioned the *mujahideen* victory in Afghanistan as the primary reason for their return, whilst 14 % said simply that they were longing for home. The first reason is also the explanation supported by all non-migrants, when asked why they believed their fellow villagers had returned from Iran; or, as one expressed it '[P]eople were thinking that war is over, mujahideen became victorious and the country got its independence' (Af-S619). And, as another added '...therefore they came back to undertake the rehabilitation of houses and utilizing lands they own, (Af-S609).





**Box 25:** *Refugee Return from Iran*

**Source:** K. Ask, K.B. Harpviken, *A Strand and Survey*, 1999

The majority of those returning did so on a voluntary basis, although 21 % did see it as a forced act, citing Iranian pressure on them as the reason for their return. Thus, one might conclude that when the main cause for their flight was removed they opted to return, despite knowledge of the degree of destruction of houses and property and awareness of what difficulties they could expect to meet back home. An indication of their financial status, following an average of 14 years in exile, was that 11 % said they brought money with them back to Afghanistan while an equal number did not bring anything at all, and as many as 70 % listed household items. Only 5 % recalled having received any form of repatriation aid, but many informants reported that the Iranian border police had confiscated household goods, kerosene and money. Although it was not possible to verify the extent of such actions, there are reasons to believe that the refugees then found other ways of sending money back to Afghanistan, not least since several informants mentioned using the unofficial Islamic banking system, the *Hawala*, for other financial transactions (for details on the *Hawala* system see Jost and Sandhu (2000)).

### 7.2.2. The Importance of Hijra

Given how well organised both the initial flight to Iran, following the Soviet invasion, and the return to Afghanistan when the ‘infidel’ forces were defeated were, it is appropriate to discuss whether the Islamic concept of *hijra* (see introduction in 1.7.1 and 5.5.1) influenced people’s migration pattern. This has certainly been an important element in the discourse on migration movements to and from Pakistan



(see i.a. Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988), which had a migration pattern similar to the one documented here. Certainly, as we have seen in Izhaq Suleiman village, Islam wields a strong influence, organised as the village is around the mosques and with a large number of religious leaders included in the village *shura*. There are, however, certain notable differences between the refugees crossing into Pakistan from the border areas of Afghanistan and those leaving from Herat for Iran. Most prominent is the religious difference; whereas Pakistanis and Afghans are both predominantly *Sunni* Muslims the Iranians are *Shia* Muslims. However, as many of the *Sunni* interviewees reported having received *zakat* from their Iranian *Shia* brothers, it should indicate an acceptance from the Iranian *Shias* of the Afghans as fellow Muslims, as they offered them *zakat*, and an equal acceptance of the *Shias* from the Afghan *Sunnis*, as they accepted receiving the *zakat*.

There are three other differences between those fleeing to Pakistan and those moving to Iran that might hold more importance for the Afghan migrants in this regard. One is certainly *Pashtunwali*, which is the tribal codex of the *Pashtuns*, who predominantly inhabit southern parts of Afghanistan and the border areas of Pakistan. This codex not only requires the provision of sanctuary and protection for fellow tribes fleeing an enemy, it also urges the provision of hospitality for as long as they have a need for it. This extremely strong refugee codex would, as with the *hijra*, be revoked when the external threat to the tribes (and *Sunni* Muslims) was removed, and the forced migrants would be expected to return, or at least not be entitled to further assistance. For migrants fleeing to Iran no similar tribal connection existed across the Iranian border entitling them to the same degree of assistance. Present in Iran, however, was a large number of Afghan labour migrants and the possibility that many families would have had at least one of their members living there for a substantial period.

Moreover, as noted, a marked difference existed in the way refugees were organised and assisted in these two countries, which might influence the degree of attention they paid to their Islamic identity. While in Iran the Afghan migrants were much less organised and membership of the various *mujahideen* parties was completely voluntarily. In Pakistan, on the other hand, the government accepted only a limited number of Afghan Islamic 'parties' with whom migrants had to register in order to be entitled to refugee status. Refugee camps were controlled by the same parties, who were then extremely vocal concerning their Islamic identity, running schools, women's organisations, mosques and *madrassas*, where their religious beliefs were continually emphasised. Their identity as Muslim migrants was thus cemented and reinforced by the way they were organised, managed and led by the Pakistani authorities and Afghan parties, aided and abetted by the international community.

This difference in approaches to organising the refugees in Iran and Pakistan could explain the finding that none of the forced migrants to Iran, contrary to findings from Pakistan, provided a religious justification for their flight from and return to Afghanistan. The only reference found in the interview material which might indicate a *hijra* justification for flight was provided by a mullah, stating '[W]e no longer wanted to live in an area that was controlled by communist government. Therefore, we preferred to migrate to another area which was controlled by *mujahideen*' (Af-S601). This statement, however, cannot be judged as fully representative of the wider group of forced migrants, as it might involve security

issues for the informant, given his formal Islamic position as mullah. Furthermore, he was not fleeing the ‘infidel’ controlled Afghanistan for another Muslim country, but was seeking refuge within Afghanistan, though in a ‘Muslim controlled’ part of the country.

A conclusion on the extent of the *hijra* influence on forced migration in the Afghan case, using a comparison with the Iranian and Pakistani case, is thus not as clear-cut as one might expect from what is suggested in the literature and from identified migration patterns to and from these countries. Decisions on migration seem rather to be informed and influenced by the way migration and migrants are organised and managed, and whether there are other bonds, such as a tribal organisation or family link, that replaced, reinforced or added to the *hijra* concept.

It therefore proves impossible to draw from the Afghan case a more general conclusion that all Muslims will flee if invaded by what might be defined as an infidel (or non-Muslim) country or force, and immediately return upon the defeat or withdrawal of such forces from their native country. Indeed, the fact that the vast majority of Afghans, including those supporting the *mujahideen*, remained inside Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion and occupation, and remained in Pakistan and Iran following their withdrawal, should be the best counter-indication to such a generalisation of an Islamic collective migration pattern. However, what might be more properly established from this example is that the *hijra* argument is likely to be used as a religious justification for flight and return, especially when the refugee environment is highly politicised, with the frequent use of Islamic symbols (such as *jiḥād*, *mujahideen*) to bolster military resistance and recruitment for the various Islamic parties.

### 7.3. Field Findings: Izhaq Suleiman and Sara-e-Nau Villages

Throughout the fieldwork and the surveys conducted in the Izhaq Suleiman and Sara-e-Nau villages in the Herat Province of Afghanistan the aim was to identify patterns of forced migration, and to ascertain what needs the forced migrants had for humanitarian assistance and how promptly these needs were met by non-governmental organisations. These empirical findings then form the foundation for a discussion on how applicable forced migration theory is in complex political emergencies such as Afghanistan.

#### 7.3.1. Migration Patterns

There is, however, another interesting finding relating to migration and return that needs to be analysed further. Among those returned, as many as 92 % reported that they continued to have relatives residing in Iran, of whom 71 % of returnees were close family and 29 % more distant family members. These numbers, however, include different groups of migrants, not all of them forced. First to be mentioned is the group that did not return from 1992/93 onwards. The interviews and survey indicate that, on average, between 1 and 10 families did not return to each *mahalla*, and 60 % of those interviewed knew of someone who had remigrated to Iran from their *mahalla* after their first return. The reason for both the lack of return and

remigration was primarily seen to relate to the economic situation in the village, cited by 85%, while only 6 % mentioned destroyed housing and 9 % referred to the lack of peace in the Herat region. Those interviewees who did not migrate all suggested economic reasons for their lack of return, or as one stated '[B]ecause the economic condition is not good and work is not found here. Their living condition is pretty good in Iran' (Af-S621), and another explained '[T]hey enjoy a better life in Iran, if they return their economy would definitely be quite poor (Af-S621). Or, as another concluded '[T]hey are not able to take advantage from their lands and orchards. They are not able to revitalize their farms and carry out agricultural activities' (Af-S617).

Thus, one can see that while a large group did return when the warfare they regarded as a threat to their safety was removed, a smaller group was concerned about the economic situation in the village and thus preferred to stay behind in Iran, or to remigrate after having tried to re-establish themselves in their home villages. From the individual interviewees it emerges that a few members of most families remained in Iran during the first migration phase, and that later on, when the economic problems in Herat became evident, young able-bodied men returned to Iran to take advantage of the job opportunities offered there. These then had to pay quite a large amount to be smuggled back into Iran, as the border was closed on the Iranian side, and typically they had to work for at least six months to be able to pay the costs the smugglers demanded for bringing them to one of the larger Iranian cities with the most prosperous job opportunities. As many explained, the police would then apprehend them before they had been paid by their employer, and forcibly return them to Afghanistan.

However, despite this high number of villagers earning an income in Iran, and the high degree of contact that existed with family members residing there, less than 15 % admitted receiving any economic contribution from these family members. If this information is correct, a majority of the Afghans residing in Iran by 1999 were only earning enough to repay their debts and then to sustain their own lives, and those of their closest family living with them there. There are, nevertheless, indications from some interviewees that remittances were an important factor in the family economy. When asked about the possibility of expanding their land holding one stated that 'some families might have up to 5 persons going to Iran to work, then they could afford to buy land', which, moreover, indicates that the income per person was rather small.

The issue of refugee status is important here as well, since, according to informers, Iran stopped granting refugee status to Afghans arriving after 1993, even if they arrived in Iran due to oppression and violation of their basic rights, as was obviously the case with the ethnic *Hazaras*. Another violation of basic refugee rights in Iran was the drafting of Afghan migrants for military training that took place in 1998 and early 1999. During this period, according to one informant, later confirmed by senior UNDP personnel (private communication, Islamabad, May 1999), about 3000 younger men underwent military training by the Iranian military, with the aim of using them to overthrow the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. Several sources suggested that, in this respect, a forced repatriation scheme initiated in early 1999 served as a means to transport these newly trained troops back into Western Afghanistan, and intermingle them with families expelled during the same period. This adds a new 'forced' dimension to the refugee warrior definition, and illustrates

how states might not only evade their international obligation to provide protection for refugees, but also use them as cannon fodder for their own political agenda.

### 7.3.2. Meeting Humanitarian Needs

Arguably, a massive forced migration of Afghans from Iran could have a devastating effect on the villages as not only would a large number of people return but these would also need to be lodged and fed; the loss of any remittances, however small, would also further reduce the villages' income, and thus make the population more vulnerable. Humanitarian support and NGO projects might then be even more important, depending on their ability to meet the needs of these villagers.

From the above documentation we have seen that the forced migrants who came to Iran, in contrast to those fleeing to Pakistan, did not receive any particular assistance beyond what was offered to ordinary Iranians by the Iranian Government, except for a minor repatriation package that UNHCR contributed, since NGOs were largely absent from Iran. While there were such large differences in the provision of international assistance for the refugees, the local population felt responsible for supporting Afghans residing in their neighbourhood. Several informants explained that they had benefited from *zakat* in Iran, provided by their neighbours, which certainly helped the neediest refugees to survive. Thus, a general impression is that the Afghan refugees in Iran were far less 'aid dependent' than those assisted by the international community in Pakistan, as they had to rely on their own ability to generate income and on the generosity of their neighbours if they failed to do so.

Upon their first return the majority of those interviewed (55 %) listed a lack of housing as the largest challenge to be overcome, with economic problems (12 %), landmine problems (5 %) and lack of water (2 %) coming in second, third and fourth place. It should further be noted that quite a large number of informants cited a combination of the above problems (26 %). In short, in the rebuilding of a village that had been destroyed by war, the primary concern was for having a house for the family to stay in, income and safety from mines, and, at that time, water for drinking.

However, when informants were asked about what they regarded as the primary need of the village and for themselves in spring 1999 their responses were rather different. At that time as many as 79 % of those interviewed listed irrigation and water for agricultural production as the primary need of the village, with a further 5 % mentioning flood protection and dam reconstruction, although only 2 % actually listed support for increased agricultural production. A number of single needs were each listed by only one informant, including the need for income generation programmes, electricity, literacy courses, a health clinic, work opportunities and the building of a new mosque. Many of these latter needs were suggested by women, which could indicate that they missed some of the facilities they had enjoyed in Iran. Still, the vast majority of both women and men, landowners and landless, agreed unanimously on the need for an increase in water supply for agricultural production, clearly indicating a common concern in the village about their ability to produce enough food to support themselves, and possibly also to be able to sell produce at the market in Herat.

Thus over a period of about six to seven years the needs of the returned population had changed quite dramatically, from a multitude of problems centred around re-establishment in the village to a concentration on the need for increased food production to feed an increasing number of villagers and forced returnees. Reinforcing this shift would also be threats of increased forced migration and sealed borders preventing people from seeking jobs in Iran, or at least reducing the financial benefits from such labour migration, owing to the increased sums that had to be paid to the smugglers to bring them into Iran.

### 7.3.3. Timeliness of Humanitarian Assistance

A review of the humanitarian assistance provided in the village proved difficult, since although many knew that some assistance had been provided, they usually did not know the name of the organisation that had been assisting them. However, linking information from the villagers with NGO activity reports and interviews with NGO staff, an overview of humanitarian activities materialises. What emerges is that some had received a repatriation package when returning from Iran, including a shovel, about which one informant had asked whether it was for the returnees 'to dig our own graves', and, for some, a crash course in mine awareness. The ICRC had provided food and some equipment following an incident in which a flash flood hit the village during the early 1990s, and UNHCR and the Rural Rehabilitation Department of the local government had assisted with the establishment of water pumps. An NGO, the Norwegian Project Office/Rural Rehabilitation Association of Afghanistan (NPO/RRAA), had undertaken some courses for income generating projects by the mid-1990s, while at the time of the research two NGOs were active in the village. These were the Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy-conservation in Afghanistan (AREA) and the Afghan Mine Awareness Association (AMAA). The first had a range of projects while the latter was only involved in mine awareness and their projects/training were open to both men and women. Both of these agencies had demanded the establishment of separate *shuras* in the village to meet their own requirements, although a closer review of the different *shura* arrangements revealed that they largely included the same villagers. The *arbab* and the village *maulawi* were in both of these, although holding different official positions. The NGOs' argument for the establishment of separate *shuras* was that they wanted to ensure the inclusion of different groups in their *shura*, with either a wider representation of villagers and not only the elite, as AREA argued, or someone with a particular interest in and knowledge of humanitarian mine action, as AMAA demanded.

This leads to a review of the timeliness of these NGO interventions, and the villagers' knowledge of them. What humanitarian agencies reportedly provided in the village following the return in 1992 and 1993 was safe drinking water, with agencies assisting villagers in digging wells and installing hand pumps in the village. Interestingly, most villagers did not list this project among assistance received, not even those informants sitting on the water pump when interviewed.<sup>90</sup> This might indicate that this type of assistance was not what they had seen a need for, or asked for, or were asked to participate in the implementation of, and thus they did not fully appreciate this project. An argument to support this observation is that many more

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<sup>90</sup> The waterpumps had an inscription providing details on donor, implementer and installation year.

informants did actually mention the relief assistance they received following a flood that hit the village in the same period as the water pumps were installed. At that time a large number of houses were destroyed, and it was a one-off event, with limited food and shelter support distributed. However, it was a response to what they needed and had asked for.

A few years later an income-generating programme was started in the village, including assistance for establishing shops and carpet weaving. While welcomed by the small number of people that received assistance at that time, it appeared not to have effected any major changes in the village economy, possibly because it was a one-off event, terminated when the first round of beneficiaries had established their home businesses and repaid their loans. Rather than allowing this income to benefit a larger number of villagers, organised through a village association, the policy of this NGO was to use the repaid money to establish smaller projects in other villages.<sup>91</sup>

In 1998 two Afghan NGOs now present in Izhaq Suleiman initiated a range of new projects; one was a mine awareness programme, while the other introduced an income-generating project, with both male and female beneficiaries. Defined as an environmental project, they provided loans for villagers buying solar cookers produced by the same NGO. The loan scheme included a degree of village self-organisation as a project committee was established and the NGO interacted both with these and with the *shura* that they had demanded be established before initiating any projects in the village.

With the exception of the flood relief all other projects were initiated in accordance with the type of projects the NGOs in question had in their portfolio, rather than being based on what the villagers had expressed a specific need for. In the case of the provision of mine-awareness training and loan schemes, these were meeting needs in the village if reaching the most in need of such information and loans; the solar cookers, however, seemed chosen more by the need to satisfy the environmental profile of the NGO and to find buyers for their products than by the desire to meet the expressed needs of the villagers.<sup>92</sup>

It can be summarised that at no time during the period under study did the humanitarian activities correlate with what the villagers ranked as their most important needs. After the return from Iran, when the demand was for the rebuilding of houses, there were no such programmes provided, although the income generation programme could be seen as an attempt to target the economic problems listed by some of the returnees.

Likewise, in 1999, when the overwhelming majority of informants listed irrigation and agricultural assistance as being their primary concern, the NGOs' focus was on mine awareness and loan schemes, including those for the NGO environment programme. However, when reviewing the village needs ranked as a second, third

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<sup>91</sup> This Afghan NGO argued for reaching a wide number of beneficiaries, but then increased the administrative costs of the projects as the project monitoring, loan collection and selections of new beneficiaries had to be handled by agency staff.

<sup>92</sup> Some villagers who had invested in such cookers were rather dissatisfied with the performance of the product.

and fourth priority, one does find a larger variation, where many more requested loans (9 of 41 informants), education (6 of 41 informants) and health clinics (4 of 41 informants).

The issue of mine awareness and demining, referred to as Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA), is particularly illustrative of agencies' inability to meet needs on time and thus prevent further suffering. The magnitude of this problem and the concern of the villagers is presented in more detail below in Box 26.

*The son of my sister was killed by a mine 6 years ago (towards end of Najib's time - 1991-92). He was a small shepherd, looking after the small sheep, both he and 12 sheep were killed. This was near Jibrail, there was a military post, the sheep went into the mined area, and he went into the minefield to get them out, then a mine exploded. He was 12 years old. The husband of my sister was killed by mine (another). This man went with sheep to the same area, he looked after the big sheep - he was also killed by a mine. This was 2 years later.*

Thus the degree and timing of HMA activities in the village is of importance, to see if these converge with the needs for such indicated by villagers as they repatriated and started to make use of roads, agricultural land and grazing areas. Besides those killed while working in the fields (at least 3 farmers and 1 child), two children were killed when playing with an UXO and a number wounded when a mine brought along a mine to a wedding celebration exploded.

Examining the records of identified and cleared minefields held by the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), a pattern emerges. The priority of the first demining operation in 1993 was for areas along major roads and for a specific identified minefield in the village. Demining took place in 1997, followed by a new round in 1998, when a village road and agricultural land on the outskirts of the village were cleared following reported mine accidents. Still, in early 1999, new accidents occurred, even in a field earlier declared as demined. Mine awareness, which arguably might have been instrumental in preventing the mine accidents described above, was first organised in 1999 and not upon the mass return that took place in 1992 and 1993.

**Box 26: Mine Danger and HMA Activities**

**Source:** Interview Af-PR511, 19.04.1999

The timing of the HMA activities seems not to have been synchronised with the needs of the returning and resettling migrants, and could therefore not prevent the high number of mine and UXO incidents that took place in the village between 1993 and 1999. Thus it is understandable that a number of informants expressed a high degree of fear of mines, not least since they were reminded of the dangers of mines through the recently conducted mine awareness courses. While there is no solid documentation that mines, or the fear of mines, prevent people from returning or staying in their villages, the number of people interviewed who expressed fear of mines could be an indication that it at least influenced their migration patterns. This is something that NGOs, individually or in a coordinated manner, have been unable to mitigate.

#### **7.3.4. Villagers Knowledge about NGOs**

While these above listed projects were not major ones, they still reached a large number of villagers. Of those who responded to the question of having benefited from humanitarian assistance as many as three-quarters had received such benefits.

However, of the 55 responding to this question only 30 of the interviewees knew the name and project activity of the NGO or UN agencies that had assisted them, 17 informants only knew the project and not the name of the organisation ‘[T]he well has been dug but I don’t know who did it’ (Af-S600), while 8 had no knowledge of any organisation or projects. So in sum, villagers were fairly well informed about the agencies and the projects that had been implemented in the village. It is thus rather interesting that the villagers did not differentiate between an NGO and a UN agency. Of the 39 responding to the question all except two did not know of any difference between these two types of organisation, rather using the word *mothahed* (organisation) for them all or stating that ‘[I] don’t know the difference between an NGO and a UN agency but we consider all aid agencies as United Nations projects’ (Af-S607). Of the two informants who knew of any difference, one pointed out that there is a difference between UN and ICRC while the other explained ‘I think the UN collects money from donor countries and channels it through NGOs to implement the projects’ (Af-S615).

However, while the villagers don’t differentiate between types of humanitarian organisation they have certainly noticed their mode of operation, and whom the agencies consult in the village. Asked if the agencies work separately or are seen as working together, only 3 out of 39 respondents were of the view that they worked together while 2 thought they could work both together and separately; as many as 20 were of the view that they worked separately ‘[E]ach organisation has its own responsibility so that all existing organisations work separately (Af-S609). As many as 14 did not know, although several argued that they had only seen one NGO in their village, and, thus, could not make such a judgement, or as one stated ‘[I] don’t know, but I think they are coming to help the village’ (Af-PR020).

One of the informants, who was of the view that NGOs worked separately, commented: ‘[B]ut God knows better what they are doing’ (Af-S628), and the reason for giving such a comment might be found in the way agencies organise their village consultation. When asked whom the agencies consulted in the village all but one responded the *arbab*, or a combination of the *arbab*, the *shura*, the elders or religious leaders of the village. The one who did not give this reply stated that agencies only support the rich people of the village (Af-PR016), a view supported by several informants, one explaining that ‘[Y]ou are the first to talk to ordinary people...’ (Af-PR022). This opinion is repeated in the responses to the question posed about how they could get in contact with humanitarian agencies. Among the 38 responding, as many as 11 did not know how this could be organised, 13 suggested through the *arbab*, 9 would consider contacting them through either the *arbab* or the *shura*, and one suggested using the religious leaders ‘...who has addresses of all organisations (Af-S606). Among the remaining four informants there was a view that if an organisation came to the village they could be contacted directly, but they did not otherwise know where or how to find them as ‘...we don’t have any information about each of them’ (Af-S618), or as it was stated ‘[I]f they don’t come, we are not able to contact them’ (Af-S628). One informant explained that, ‘[S]ince humanitarian agencies did not solve our problems, therefore we don’t have any contact with them and won’t contact them any more’ (Af-S625).



### 7.3.5. NGOs and the Shura

Thus a picture emerges of a village observing humanitarian agencies coming in, one by one, consulting with the *arbab*, and possibly the *shura*, and then either coming back with support, or not being heard of again. A rather disillusioned villager described his experience of NGOs in the following manner (Af-S619) '[A]ll those NGOs that contacted the village left behind numerous promises but not one of the promises are implemented so far.'

These observations bring the role of the *arbab* and the *shura* into discussion, as it emerges that whilst these people are usually consulted by NGOs and UN agencies, there is still very limited knowledge within the village on the content of these contacts. While one might assume that one reason for the lack of information on NGO activities could stem from a limited sharing of information by the *arbab* and the *shura* members, the informants provided a rather different explanation. Close to half of the 70 responding to the open-ended question about the responsibility of the *shura* answered that it was primarily to solve intra-communal conflicts '[I]f there is a fight for land or garden they try to sort it out' (Af-PR514). A further 10 informants gave a related response, arguing that its role was to solve problems within the village '[T]he *shura* is responsible for finding solutions to problems between individuals and community' (Af-S606). A few mentioned the *shura*'s role in maintaining contact with the government '[I]f there are some issues they will consult with each other, then contact the government' (AfPR512), organising the community, helping poor people or managing the village, but, interestingly enough, only 10 of the informants saw its role as being to establish contact and undertake liaison with humanitarian agencies '[T]o receive the employees of NGOs...' (Af-S614), and only 7 did not know what role the *shura* did have.

So, while the NGOs active in these villages placed great importance on the *shura* as a connection point between themselves and the villagers, and even as a body for village development, even establishing their own *shura* in order to meet NGO criteria, the villagers did not share this developmental and consultative outlook. Instead they primarily attributed to the *shura* the traditional role held within the village, of a body designated with handling conflict resolution. This appears to indicate that both the NGOs and the *shura* they had created had done little to inform the ordinary villagers concerning either the new role of the *shura*, or the NGO's activities.

As such, the *shura*'s function, which might have been instrumental in interaction between NGOs and villagers, and in coordinating NGO activities at a village level, ended up as an administrative meeting point between a few selected villagers and one NGO. This different notion of the importance and responsibility of the *shura* might also explain why, despite the presence of many of the same persons on the three different *shuras* that existed in Izhaq Suleiman, it was not regarded as a tool for interaction between villagers and NGOs. If such a situation were to emerge, it would have to be the NGOs that went on to present more broadly their aims, objectives and project plans to a wider collection of villagers, and, not least, to include all the villagers in the needs assessment process.

While an NGO such as AREA claimed to have selected their *shura* members through an open and transparent process, including a large number of male villagers, one might assume that they had to a lesser extent emphasised the role of the *shura* members in communicating with the villagers, seeing them more as a contact point between the villagers and the NGO. As explained by the NGO staff, they undertook a more rapid needs assessment exercise in collaboration with the *shura* members, not involving all the villagers in this process.

This could explain a significant difference found in the research material between the response from the informants in Izhaq Suleiman and Sara-e-Nau village; in the first village only a few of those interviewed mentioned the role of the *shura* in maintaining contact with NGOs, while in the latter a majority of informants emphasised this role. One explanation of this marked difference might be found in the fact that a more development-oriented NGO, Ockenden International, had conducted a comprehensive PRA session in Sara-e-Nau village, involving both men and women, shortly before the survey was conducted.

A review of their PRA procedures reveals an emphasis on inclusion of the villagers in defining the roles and responsibilities of, respectively, the villagers, the *shura*, the NGO and the local authorities (Harpviken, Suleman et al. 2001). However, given how recently this PRA exercise was conducted in Sara-e-Nau village compared to Izhaq Suleiman village it cannot be seen as providing sufficient evidence to suggest that such an approach might better transform the *shura* from its traditional inward-looking conflict resolution role to a more developmental, inclusive and participatory *shura* role.

### 7.3.6. Comparison of Empirical Findings and Migration Theory

There is a need to review these empirical findings in the context of the theory of forced migration outlined in Chapter 1, in which a major criticism of the theories was a lack of understanding of the dynamics of the decision-making processes enabling flight and return. Furthermore, the degree of individual and group decisions was questioned, as was the way of differentiating between forced and voluntary migration (Illustration 2), and thus between legal and illegal refugees (Illustration 1).

What is documented in the Herat case is that it has not been a clear-cut and one-off flight and return pattern for most Afghan refugees, but rather repetitive migration cycles, even after the main conflict causing flight had ended. Thus, over time one might argue that the push and pull notion for forced migration is not enough to explain such movements. The strong emphasis on the family unit in the process of migration or remigration points towards more of a collective than an individual decision-making process, not least because the women interviewed did not leave or return on their own, but were accompanied by family members. It is also noticeable that families placed ‘anchors’ in both the communities they left from and those they later returned from, in order to spread the risk and to ensure the availability of a backup solution or someone to provide a certain degree of income for the family. Their willingness to pay the equivalent of six months’ income in Iran in order to enter illegally to work there might be an indication of how important this additional income opportunity was judged to be in the village.

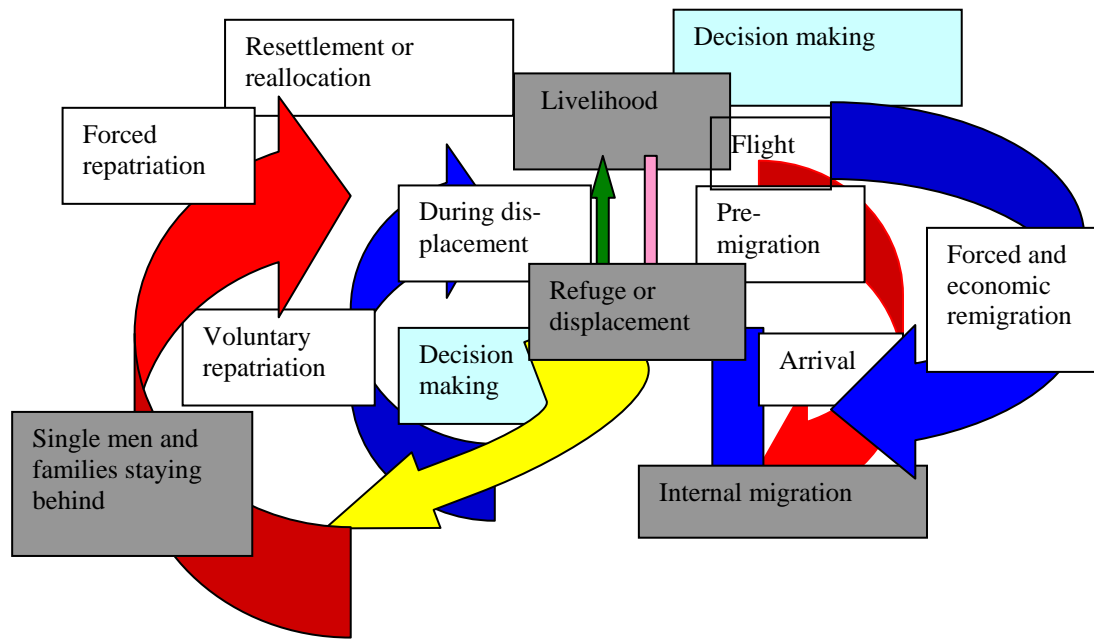
On the other hand, although this was not properly documented from the interviews, it could be argued that by sending the young men back to Iran they also ensured that those who could otherwise have been forcibly recruited to the Taliban army were unavailable. What is clear is that the end of a war, and even the end of what might be defined as a religious justification for exile, did not end migration for the majority of Afghans. Rather, their concerns shifted from those relating to the dangers of physical violence to those related to economic vulnerability in their home community. As we have seen, when there were no humanitarian projects addressing their primary needs the population again reverted to migration to be able to uphold their livelihoods. Iran's forced expulsion of Afghan refugees and their border closure made this pattern more difficult for the Afghans, but they were willing to take on a higher personal as well as financial risk to obtain a degree of financial security for their families.

Certainly, the Herat case illustrates how difficult it is to differentiate between forced and voluntary migration. While the first large-scale round of migration, caused by military operations in the Herat region, certainly can be labelled forced migration, it could be argued that migration taking place during the Taliban period, even if primarily pursued for economic reasons, could still be labelled a forced move. This is mainly because it was caused by poverty and/or by the effects of environmental disasters such as drought and floods, sharply reducing income from agriculture and livestock holding. Added to this are other arguments, such as human rights abuses by the Taliban regime, which was one of three reasons for the UN Security Council's imposing sanctions on them. However, whilst the Iranian government acknowledged and condemned the abuses of the Taliban regime they did not acknowledge the rights of Afghans to obtain refuge in Iran.

This not only serves to highlight concerns about the validity of making sharp distinctions between forced and voluntary migration, but also illustrates that, despite the existence of international instruments for refugee protection, these can be set aside by individual governments who have signed up to the refugee convention. The entire academic discourse on refugee movements and rights can be seen as artificial as long as countries' and groups' willingness to comply with the given regulations is dependent on their internal and international political concerns and, arguably, the willingness of the world community to assist these countries to support individual actions. This was made even more difficult when agencies such as UNHCR, as in early 1999, did not even register Afghans returning from Iran, and whether or not they had returned voluntarily or were expelled.

For the Afghan refugees the lesson was rather simple during this period; they had no rights whatsoever, either in Afghanistan or in Iran. For them, the international refugee organisations were of very limited help; in the end they had to rely on their closest family and, possibly, on their neighbours. As for Afghanistan, at this period of time all migrants, internal and external, seem eligible to be defined as forced migrants, and implicitly hold an equal right for international assistance and protection.

Such considerations and knowledge would then certainly influence their migration pattern, and a much more complex migration and remigration structure than that outlined in Chapter 1 might be presented (see Box 27 below).



**Box 27:** A Complex Migration Circle

**Source:** Author, 2002

Arguably, such a diverse pattern will hold a number of challenges for NGOs who aim not only to support forced migrants, but to make a real difference in their protection and the upholding of their livelihoods. Firstly, they will require increased knowledge of this diverse migration pattern and of who within the refugee groups will return (families: elderly men, women and children, single men with family back in Iran) and who will remain in the country of exile. Secondly, aid and protection activities need to be tailored to meet specific needs at each of the return phases. As regards Izhaq Suleiman, this would, ideally speaking, first be the provision of mine awareness and demining, then assistance for rebuilding of houses, followed by support for restoration of agriculture and initiatives for other means of income. Following this would be improved irrigation and better marketing mechanisms for various products. During all these phases, improvement of the local ability to cope with natural disasters and a willingness to advocate on behalf of the population towards commanders and the Taliban remained important. This could be done through strengthening the village *shura*, if the role of this community body was expanded from solely engaging in internal conflict mediation to involving itself in more outward oriented and village management activities. Thirdly, the NGOs will need to have the ability to plan for and act on a massive and sudden repatriation, and finally, to have a flexible enough system to be able to meet the needs of individuals and not only larger groups of forced migrants.

An underlying premise for planning is knowledge of the situation of the returnees: their strengths and resources and their unmet needs. Furthermore, information is needed on the likely impact of the return of a larger number of migrants on the communities they return to, or what a lack of continued financial support might lead to. All of this was lacking in the case of the refugees returning from Iran during the spring of 1999.

Firstly, with the exception of Ockenden International, which was in the process of establishing representation in Iran, no other Herat-based NGO was represented there and thus they lacked specific knowledge of the situation and needs of the returnees. Secondly, there was no knowledge of what plans Iran had for forced repatriation of Afghans or even what agreement had been reached between the Iranian government and UNHCR concerning voluntary repatriation, apart from reports of media messages encouraging Afghans to return during the spring. Thirdly, UNHCR had closed their post at the Iranian border and thus did not register returnees, nor whether they had returned voluntarily or as a result of compulsion. Furthermore, the UNHCR office in Herat was at this time staffed by national personnel whose only response when interviewed was to state that it was prohibited by the head office to provide information about refugee return and the tripartite agreement. NGOs and researchers were advised to contact the UNHCR offices in Islamabad, Pakistan for information. This office, when contacted, referred inquiries to the Teheran office in Iran that was responsible for Afghans returning from Iran, but which, in the end, did not provide any reply to the written enquiry.

What NGOs then had to relate to was the information they picked up in the villages where they had projects, through talking with returnees and villagers about the estimated scale of the return. But while this formed a sketchy picture the lack of a more authoritative verification of figures on expected return restricted their ability to forward funding applications to international donors, or at least to be able to plan and budget for a massive repatriation. With their intended beneficiaries on the other side of an international border, their ability to assess their needs upon their return to Herat was extremely limited.

This illustration leads into the second part of the field study, that of how NGOs operated in the selected villages, how they understood the communities they had chosen to work in, how they related to other humanitarian actors, community organisations and individuals, and finally, how they assessed needs, what formalised relations they established and what projects they prioritised. This was explored through interviews with villagers, observation of NGO activities in the villages, interviews with NGO field staff and regional directors and managers.

#### 7.4. Assessing Resources and Needs

Of the NGOs operating in the villages included in the research project, two were Afghan and the third was a Western NGO with Afghan staff in management positions. They had all adopted different approaches in interacting with the villagers and in determining the needs of the village. The first Afghan NGO specialised in mine awareness training, and did not engage in any other activities. The second was involved in a broad range of rehabilitation activities, specialising in environmental projects. The Western NGO was primarily involved in development-oriented projects for refugees and returnees.

### 7.4.1. The Mine-awareness NGO

The mine awareness NGO's pre-assessment indicated that mines and UXOs constituted a problem in Izhaq Suleiman village and thus they entered into negotiation with the village *shura* to obtain approval for starting a one-month project there. The training, conducted by a husband and wife team living in the village for this period, was conducted in separate sessions for men, women and children. Later, they requested the establishment of a special mine awareness *shura*, which would be the focal point in the village for reporting findings of mines and UXOs, and for maintaining contact with the NGO, local authorities and local coordination structure for humanitarian mine action.

When interviewed, the male trainer explained that he had no influence on where the training should take place, as that was decided by his office. Nor was he informed as to whether the training had come into being after a request from the village or, if not, what particular selection criteria the NGO had followed. When asked about his view on community participation he immediately understood that as a contribution from the community towards the NGO, answering (AF-PRO25) '[I]f the NGOs can do it by themselves, that is better, without community contribution, but contribution is also good. If they can give people "man days" jobless can get jobs.'<sup>93</sup>

The response from the director of the same organisation on the same question indicated an almost identical understanding of the term, though elaborating (AF-PRO35) 'it is more than to organise people, it is to encourage people to participate in the work.' A further note on agencies engaged in HMA activities might be relevant here, as almost all field directors interviewed expressed very similar attitudes. Their very technical job approach and the notion that their task was to save people from danger, had obviously formed a very strong understanding, on their side, that there was no need to involve the local communities in any way in their planning and programming. When one field director was questioned about which community organisations the NGO related to he replied (AF-PRO33) '[W]hen I go to the field I should meet the *arbab* and explain my regulations to him and he should explain this in the village. They should not come close to the demining operation.' The whole notion of being able to obtain information or even discuss with the villagers which areas the NGO should prioritise for mine clearance seemed a totally alien idea. Such a process was not in accordance with their standard operating procedures.

Reverting to Izhaq Suleiman village: arguably, based on statistics of mine and UXO accidents and registered minefields close to the village, there was certainly a need for mine awareness training, although probably more so for demining activities. They did not, for instance, use the shortest road towards Herat city as they feared it would be mined and used cows to plough in certain fields rather than tractors as these were less likely to trigger any possible anti-tank mine (and cheaper to replace). They had adapted to the realities in which they lived.

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<sup>93</sup> The term 'man-day' refers to jobs with payment defined per day of work per man.

### 7.4.2. The Environment Focused NGO

The environment-focused NGO had a more open approach towards the village. Working with a small team of NGO employees they went through the village, familiarising themselves with the outline and activities before meeting with the village *shura*. They obtained basic information about the village from them and what needs the *shura* identified as most pressing to be met, before a map of the village was drawn up. Without any further investigation or additional information gathering, a 'Development Shura Report' was prepared (AREA Herat 1999), including a list of needs identified by the village *shura*, which formed the basis of the decision-making report. It is important to note here that no women were consulted during this period, and only male NGO employees were involved in the needs assessment process, and, furthermore, there were no records of community resources. One might describe this methodology as 'participation light' since it contained some of the basic features of PRA methods, although it lacked a more systematic and structured approach to communication with the villagers.

A further demand from the NGO before initiating activities in the village was the formation of a separate development *shura* for them to relate to. Here they set specific demands on its composition and representation, intended to broaden the composition beyond the traditional village *shura* composition. However, as documented above, the technicality of the *shura* formation seems to have received more attention than actually setting up and developing the role of the NGO *shura*.

Another interesting finding is that, when assessing the organisation's activities in view of what their report had suggested, there is a clear mismatch. During a *shura* meeting a list of 10 priority needs was drawn up, these being: flood protection, irrigation wells, carpet weaving projects, tractor acquisition (on a credit scheme), dam construction, road rehabilitation, mosque repair, school construction, *hamam* (bath) construction and the establishment of a health clinic. The NGO mobilisers, who had conducted the survey, in their comment to the NGO agreed with all these suggestions, except for the mosque repair and *haman* construction, and recommended projects that could meet these (AREA 1999: 10).

According to the NGO field officer (AF-PRO26) the NGO responded with the establishment of a credit scheme, initially with 50 beneficiaries, later extended by a further 12. They also introduced solar cookers, which villagers could then buy through the credit scheme, and they also planned to introduce a biogas project on similar terms; by doing so the NGO had actually created a market for their own products. Although well intended from the NGO's side, the villagers were not pleased with the products they received, as the cooking process was both long and cumbersome, and, from the start, such projects were not on their priority list.

As regards flood protection and well drilling, which the *shura* had prioritised, project proposals had been submitted to external donors, so far without any response. Other project proposals had not been addressed by the NGO. When the field worker was asked what he understood community participation to be, he emphasised that the community could contribute towards the project, rather than have any chance of influencing decision-making. '[W]e work with the *shura*, they assist for the

participation. They organise so people contribute with labour and material' (AF-PRO26).

This view was echoed, and slightly elaborated upon, by the field director when he was asked about the role of their intended beneficiaries in project planning (AF-PRO32).

*It depends on the type of projects, like for micro credit they are involved 100 %. We give the credit, help them to choose a trade and inform them on how to save money and form groups. We help them but the activities are up to them. We also have female mobilisers to ensure that women are included. For construction projects the beneficiaries are to provide local materials and staff, and then the project is implemented by us.*

In the light of these two statements the NGO's practical project selection and prioritisation is more understandable, and can be interpreted as meaning that the villagers participate with the NGO, not the NGO with the villagers. Such a view, however, was not what the director of this NGO advocated; he stated (AF-PRO134) rather that 'it should be an NGO participation with the beneficiaries. The ownership must lie with the community'. However, when he was asked what influence beneficiaries had on their project planning his response was more vague: '[I]f you take the community as the beneficiaries, we should go by what they propose. Although in many cases we know what they need.' Again, this leaves an impression that, while in theory subscribing to commonly held views on beneficiary participation, in the end the NGO would actually know better what their beneficiaries would need, and they could then provide what they already had within their project portfolio.

#### **7.4.3. The Development-oriented NGO**

In the Sara-e-Nau village, where only the survey team conducted interviews, a Western NGO had recently started work. While they had undertaken a fairly thorough needs assessment, they had not yet started any project implementation, thus preventing the possibility of comparison with the project policy of other NGOs. There are, however, several important differences between the needs assessment approach undertaken by this NGO and the others, which might explain the noticeable differences in villagers' attitudes towards NGOs and the village *shura* that the fieldwork established. Of particular importance here seems to be the use of PRA methods and the full inclusion of women in the needs assessment process.

The regional manager, an agriculturalist by training, had established the Herat office, and, furthermore, had adapted their PRA strategy to the complex reality of the Taliban-run Herat province. During the interview (AF-PRO47) he expressed a different attitude towards the villagers and the community organisations from that observed among other NGOs. When asked about community participation he emphasised the NGO's role in establishing a participatory approach 'from needs assessment to evaluation communities have to participate in decision making at all stages', and he emphasised that 'villagers select the beneficiaries for the projects', which then was done through a participatory needs assessment. He explained that at the start he had been sceptical about this approach, and being a well educated Afghan



he had resisted handing over much of the authority of this process to the villagers. However, he had come to realise that this process actually worked and that the villagers were not only willing but perfectly capable of handling such responsibility. When discussing these matters with the NGO staff it became evident that the same attitude and positive approach towards the villagers was deeply rooted within the organisational culture. This certainly enabled a common vision and direction for their work, which was one of the major characteristics of this NGO.

The NGO invited the research team to observe their PRA exercise in Sara-e-Nau village. Here they ran separate sessions for male and female villagers, and then priorities were compared and weighed up against each other for a common list of village priority needs. However, long before the process had come that far the NGOs had spent considerable time in the village, in order to present themselves and their objectives, and, with the villagers, to create a map of the village and its surroundings and agree on how a PRA process could be conducted in the village. During a three-hour session they undertook a range of procedures in sessions in which all the villagers were included, both young and old, and encouraged to contribute (Ask, Harpviken et al. 1999) (for details see Box 28 below).

**PRA Procedures:**

- 1) Grouping villagers according to location (and identifying vulnerable persons).
- 2) Mapping of village.
- 3) Identifying human resources.
- 4) Establishing migration history.
- 5) Identifying problems.
- 6) Establishing responsibility for addressing identified problems (Distinguishing between three categories of responsibility: by the villagers; by the government; and jointly by the villagers and the NGO).
- 7) Prioritising identified problems (from the category of problems to be addressed jointly by villagers and NGO).
- 8) Outlining the next step and agreeing on the next meeting.

**Box 28: PRA Procedures**

*Source: Ask, Harpviken et al., 1999*

The NGO did not come alone to the village for the PRA sessions; they brought with them representatives of the local authorities and Afghan employees of several UN agencies. Thus, having these present, they could immediately refer identified problems to the right authorities.

Through group work, circulation of group participants and actively encouraging comments from minorities within the village, such as the disabled and the youngest,

they ensured that no one was able to dominate, and that a balanced view was presented before they established their priorities.

As the NGO selected not only single villages in an area, but clusters of related villages, they were able later to identify projects that could be shared between a number, or all, of the villages and have them jointly work on these. From the very start it was evident, despite high expectations from having a foreign NGO coming in, that any project would be a common endeavour, in which both sides participated and contributed towards a common goal.

This much more open and inclusive needs assessment performed in Sara-e-Nau village might explain why the villagers expressed such a different opinion on what the role of a *shura* should be, and on what knowledge they had of an NGO. Timewise, the staff of this NGO probably spent no longer in the village than the other NGOs discussed above, but they seem to have spent their time in a different way and in much more direct contact with the villagers.

#### 7.4.4. National Findings

It became possible to compare these local findings from Herat with national findings through a review of how four major United Nations agencies<sup>94</sup> undertook their needs and vulnerability assessments in Afghanistan (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001). A major finding here was that the UN agencies actually relied on their NGO implementing partners to undertake their needs assessment, as part of their project proposal process. While in handbooks and various manuals (UNHCR; UNICEF 1994; OCHA 1999; WFP 1999) all UN agencies emphasise the use of participatory methods, they did little to ensure that the NGOs applied these in their needs assessments or established training sessions for UN or NGO staff. Only two of the organisations, WFP and UNICEF, had attempted to generate information on national vulnerability and needs to inform their project prioritisation.<sup>95</sup> For many of the UN agencies the needs were so overwhelming that, in fact, they did not see any particular need to explore the details, as they would not have been in a position to meet them all anyway.

The evaluation identified three distinct needs assessment mechanisms (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: vi):

- A mandate- and rights-based approach, whereby the needs of the population are given by agency mandates and/or international norms.
- Micro-level needs assessments undertaken by implementing partners, mostly NGOs using a range of methods from 'light' to more fully participatory.
- Monitoring processes and broader surveys to inform situation analyses and capture trends.

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<sup>94</sup> These were OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP.

<sup>95</sup> The WFP had Vulnerability and Analysis Mapping (VAM), with teams going to all provinces to gather basic information on vulnerability. UNICEF established a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MISC) to gather basic information on health and education issues.

It was further noticed that a full participatory needs assessment was only undertaken if the NGO implementer chose to do so; only a few NGOs applied a full version of Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) or Participatory Learning Appraisal (PLA) (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 28). The majority of the NGOs either did a 'light' PRA or, more frequently, sought their information through one-off interviews in the villages or city wards.

The groups that suffered the most from having their needs recorded through such rapid types of needs assessment were women and children, whose views were only rarely included in the surveys or interviews. In general, another important finding was that 'views of beneficiaries on longer-term needs are rarely solicited', and that the needs assessment process 'does not permit the target population to choose between types of projects or services received', as these are generally determined by agency mandates or programme restrictions (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 32).

Many of the Afghans interviewed during this evaluation expressed the view that the evaluation team was the first to ask for their opinions and also to ask what they regarded as the best solutions to meet their needs.<sup>96</sup> However, another worry was that several of the informants for the evaluation emphasised their weariness in having to spend time answering almost exactly the same questions from a number of NGOs, especially when, in the end, no assistance materialised. Thus, the report concluded that such uncoordinated needs assessments 'often constitute a net burden on the beneficiaries' (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: vii).

The evaluation further points towards two important results of NGO needs assessment processes being individual and project proposal driven. The first is that each NGO might apply their own criteria and measurements when they assess a specific situation, where the result might be that one NGO concludes that, within the same population, there is a need for assistance, while another NGO denies such needs exist. A prominent example is a nutrition assessment from Northern Afghanistan in 1999 where, due to the use of different methodologies, MSF and WFP had opposing views as to whether there was a need for assistance (IRIN 2001). Secondly, the evaluation established that in a competitive NGO environment 'NGOs are reluctant to share field information that is valuable for developing project proposals' (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001: 33). Arguably, such a reluctance to share basic information not only impedes any coordination process when NGOs should be attempting to establish more joint planning mechanisms, it also prohibits the establishment of a national overview of needs as well as the development of documentation of regional and group differences. This, in the end, might reduce the impact of assistance provision.

Thus, this evaluation largely confirms the impression established from the Herat fieldwork. Not only is needs assessment frequently undertaken without much involvement of intended beneficiaries, but due to intra-NGO competition for funding there will be a reluctance to share such information with a wider group of agencies, thereby preventing NGOs from picking up on more specific findings of other agencies.

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<sup>96</sup> Such remarks were recorded from interviews with IDPs living in camps in Kabul (war displacement), Kandahar (nomads) and Herat (drought displacement).

### 7.4.5. Theory Versus Reality

When reverting to the theory outlined in Chapter 2, in which the notion and practice of beneficiary participation is discussed and, in theory, generally approved, it is natural to start with the emphasis Dudley (1993) placed on the unequal relationship between providers and beneficiaries. Dudley's concern is that NGOs will anyway control the contribution process, and it then becomes a contribution towards the NGO project rather than an involvement in the project. While the examples from the mine awareness and environmental NGOs confirm this notion, as does the general impression from Afghanistan, there is still a diversity noted in the village in which the NGO applied the full participatory needs assessment methods. This was particularly so where a more developmental and inclusive attitude was strongly noted among the NGO management and staff, committing them to forge a more equal donor and beneficiary relationship. The regional director of a more development-oriented Afghan NGO summarised the advantages of community involvement in the following way (AF-PRO36) '[I]t is important that the people that we work with should determine the needs and priorities of their community. When they participate in planning at all levels they feel a sense of ownership and will maintain the projects.'

This observation, however, necessitates a reflection on the ability of more emergency relief oriented and service delivery NGOs to actually enter into a more developmental and beneficiary involving role, given the external pressure that is on them to deliver aid and to meet the demands of donors. Such pressure will certainly have an influence on NGOs' inclination to identify villagers' coping strategies and resources, as this might be seen to reduce the likelihood that the NGOs would suggest projects in the particular village in which their staff have invested time and resources in order to identify needs. The field interviews do not offer any clear evidence on this issue, but the UN Needs and Vulnerability assessment (op.cit. 62) points towards a broader set of problems when undertaking needs assessments in emergency situations.

*Neither formal rules nor agency practices provide a guide for addressing underlying questions that frequently arise: how to detect needs and rights that are not obvious; how to reconcile or prioritise needs among different and possibly contending groups; how to respond to what may seem unrealistic needs or needs influenced by what NGOs have to offer, and to needs expressing conflict between traditional culture and global values.*

However, there is one particularity of the Afghan context that is relevant to mention here, as it seems to influence the relationship between NGOs and beneficiaries. That is the fact that a number of NGOs and UN agencies have worked in the same communities for many years, and have established various forms of collaboration with village *shuras*, city wards, local organisations or their representatives. By doing so they have established a more formalised relationship and in return acquired knowledge of the resources and needs of these communities.

These NGOs moved from a rehabilitation/developmental mode to one of providing emergency relief support, and not the other way around, as is usual in emergency situations. Arguably, such an emergency needs assessment process might be rapidly undertaken as contact has already been made with the local communities, and these

can be instrumental in not only the selection process but in the distribution and monitoring of relief assistance. The basic idea is that the community is granted further resources to meet particular needs within their community, which they otherwise would not have been able to do from their own resources. An added benefit is increased transparency, provided the local *shura* is representative and respected within that community.

Such an emergency involvement, however, poses a number of challenges for the NGOs' relationship with their beneficiaries if they then start to provide free handouts to those they select. A starting point for a successful change of roles must be to maintain the basic operational mode, with the community organisation defining their needs and identifying who, within that particular community, is more vulnerable in that specific situation. The NGO and local community together set the conditions for the delivery of emergency assistance, which can be linked to ongoing rehabilitation or development projects.

An established community organisation, which already has a clear understanding of its role within that community and towards the relief agencies, might both be available and be in a better position to participate with the NGO than any quickly gathered *shura*. Nor are lengthy PRA sessions of any concern in such situations, since there is no need to remap the entire community, just to ensure that the community maps recent changes, a process that can be very rapidly undertaken, even if this community should be temporarily removed to another location. If the NGO had included women in their PRA processes from the very start it would be natural to continue to do so, even in an emergency situation.

On the NGO side, the fear of rising expectations is also lowered as they already have an established relationship with these communities, and most likely the communities will be well aware that the NGOs cannot meet all of their needs. If these are beyond what the NGO can provide, they should be able to call on other NGOs to assist a particular community or draw attention to particular needs through an NGO coordination arrangement. If the local community primarily relates to one or a few collaborating NGOs which they already are familiar with and, hopefully, trust, this will again sharply reduce the time spent on establishing and maintaining such a relationship, and avoid the need both for the community to 'go shopping' with other NGOs and for NGOs to survey all villages.

What might change such a positive approach would be internal and violent conflicts within the village, or the sudden influx of forced migrants from other communities or the massive return of migrants from that community. In the first case the NGO would have to try, if possible, to reconcile the different parties to the conflict; if this is not possible they would have to opt to withdraw temporarily from that community in order not to be drawn into the conflict. As for migration movements, one might assume that in most cases a contact point will exist between the community in question and the inbound or returning migrants. The communities might be allowed some time to re-establish their links and find a way to organise the new relationship before being requested to define how the needs, if any, of the arrivals should be met, or how the community can be strengthened to meet the new situation. Within the arriving community there might be human resources needed in the village, or knowledge and skills not previously held. Obvious examples are an influx of

educated people, such as teachers and doctors, and skilled labour, which was typical of the situation in Central Afghanistan in 1997 when fighting and ethnic cleansing forced *Hazaras* to leave Kabul while simultaneously being expelled from Iran in large numbers.

In conclusion, it seems that while the practice of a majority of the NGOs involved in complex emergencies might contradict the commonly promoted notion of community involvement and participation in project selection, implementation and evaluation, there is still evidence that supports the advantage of such strategies. However, this will largely depend on an NGO's ability to adapt its working methods and to develop attitudes within its staff and management that are fully supportive of the notion of 'handing over power', and of calling in and collaborating with other humanitarian actors in a coordinated manner, or through a coordination arrangement.

## **8. Regional and National Coordination Efforts**

The conclusion in Chapter 7 brings into question the NGOs' attitudes towards coordinating their efforts and sharing information with other humanitarian agencies, donors, authorities and even local communities.

This Chapter therefore starts with an introduction to the Herat based NGO coordination bodies for then to present the views NGO staff and director's expressed towards coordination, what impression they had of the coordinating bodies and how useful they viewed their activities. And, furthermore, their attitude on the use of sanctions as a way of enforcing coordination.

Then follows the findings from the national level, where NGO directors first were asked about what they regarded as NGOs comparative advantages as providers of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Attitudes on what type of relationship they envisaged established with Afghan authorities is then presented, as well as how they view the usefulness of different coordination activities. This leads to a presentation of what they regard as major benefits of being members of an NGO coordinating body, their attitudes towards the use of sanctions and what coordination activity they regards as most useful at the local, regional and national level. Finally, the issues of coordination between coordinating bodies is addressed before the findings from these interviews and surveys are used to draw a conclusion on what NGO coordination might achieve, in practise.

### **8.1. Aid Coordination in Herat**

In Herat, as earlier described, there were two NGO coordinating bodies, a UN agency coordination structure and a common mechanism about to be established, the Regional Coordination Body. Most NGOs were members of one of the NGO coordinating bodies. Which one did not matter much, since the local Taliban authorities had forced them into cohabitation and, thus, to establish a common meeting schedule. A certain degree of frustration was recorded among the NCB members, accusing the national coordination body, ACBAR, of having forced themselves into Herat rather than establishing collaboration with the NCB.

Having in mind the village experience, in which NGOs worked in parallel and established their separate village structures and undertook their independent needs assessments and fund-raising, the objective set for the next round of interviews with NGO staff was not only to search out their general attitude towards coordination, but also to try to identify what types of coordination activity they would prioritise, and what authority they would delegate to an NGO coordination body.

### 8.1.1. Attitudes Towards Coordination

In general, most NGO staff interviewed expressed a positive attitude towards coordination with other NGOs, and with UN agencies. As the regional manager of an Afghan NGO argued (AF-PRO31): '[A] lot of help has come, but the impact is very low. If all aid agencies worked together, making stronger plans, then it will have a high impact.' While an Afghan NGO director stated (AF-PRO35): '[S]uccessful coordination is when several persons are working for the same purpose, but they all have different ways of doing so. Good coordination is the one which achieves high quality in the NGOs' work.'

There were, however, a few critical comments made, such as from one fieldworker who shared his experience of NGO coordination arrangements (AF-PRO26): '[I]t is very poor, usually each NGO works with themselves and then there is competition. It is very much up to the agency but we also see that in some places there are a lot of projects in one area.' A regional manager added that he had found it very difficult to improve coordination between NGOs 'as each NGO has its own policy and strategy. To make this into a united policy is difficult.' An Afghan employee in a Western donor NGO, although supportive of coordination, provided the most negative reflection on the present coordination (AF-PR131):

*Most important is the coordination of interventions, activities, management and the use of resources. That is not at all taking place here in Herat. Here NGOs share information after they have completed their work. If coordination is to be successful it has to be a coordinated interaction before planning and implementing anything. Then agencies need to be flexible and open to change.*

When asked whether they could identify any negative aspects of coordination with NGO or UN agencies, there was mention of UN Operational Services' (OPS) rather artificial *shura* establishment in Kandahar (AF-PRO31), where the UN approach caused tension within the local communities and towards NGOs that did not accept the UN-appointed *shuras*. A certain arrogance on the side of the UN was mentioned as a negative element: 'they believe they are superior, they tell others what to do' (AF-PR134).

A regional manager of a demining agency, with a rather operational approach, thought coordination was a failure if the necessary funding was not made available to implement the planned and coordinated projects (AF-PRO35). Another manager stated that while he could not mention any negative aspects, his view was that (AF-PRO32) '[C]oordination is not sufficient as it is now. We must take maximum benefit from each agency and from each individual. We must improve it and get it much better.'

Naturally, NGOs were more reluctant to forge a closer collaboration with the Taliban authorities, although there was recognition that informing them and consulting with them would cause fewer problems for the NGOs. Several NGO employees expressed the view that evading them would cause suspicion that the NGO was involved in activities they wished to hide from the authorities. Or, as a regional director described the relationship with the Taliban (AF-PRO36): '[I]t works because we keep them updated, and that is better for us.'



An example of successful coordination was the establishment of the NGOs Coordination Board, which was underlined by one regional manager (AF-PRO33) who said that previously ‘we did not know about the plans of any other organisation - we sit together now.’ Other examples were drawn more from intra-NGO situations, one NGO calling upon the other when a village they worked in needed drinking water (AF-PRO33) or when the threat of mines caused problems for project implementation (AF-PRO32).

### 8.1.2. Usefulness and Impressions of Coordination Activities and Bodies

In a small survey, the staff of seven NGOs operating in Herat were asked to give their opinion on a) what types of coordination effort they regarded as most useful for their NGO, and b) what impression they had of the work and achievements of a range of coordinating bodies, the UN body included.

While on many questions there is a large variety noted in the answers, there is still some agreement on the usefulness of various coordination efforts and arrangements. Agreeing on common standards and guidelines among NGOs is regarded by the majority as very useful, followed by general information sharing, while sharing of more specific information ended up as the third priority. Forms are presented below in Table 6.

Question	Not useful	Partly useful	Useful	Very useful
Sharing of general information between NGOs		1	2	4
Sharing of specific information between NGOs		1	3	3
Agreeing on common standards and guidelines for NGOs			2	5
Agreeing on joint policies for the NGOs’ work in Afghanistan	1		4	2
Having beneficiary representatives in NGO coordination bodies	1	2	2	2
Having donor representatives in NGO coordination bodies	1	1	2	3
Having authority representatives in NGO coordination bodies	4	2	1	
Agreeing on common NGO programmes	1	1	2	3
Applying for common funding with other NGOs	1	4	2	
Applying for common funding with UN agencies	1	6		

**Table 6:** *Usefulness of Different Coordination Efforts and Arrangements*

**Source:** *Survey, Herat, 1999*

When asked which groups they preferred to be represented on coordination bodies, evidently the authorities were not seen as useful participants, while donor representatives were more welcome. As for beneficiary representation, there was no

clear indication on it being useful or not. For many it was obviously a new idea, which they had not given much thought to.

This issue of how coordination bodies could represent the interests of their intended beneficiaries was then explored further in interviews with NGO directors in Herat and in Peshawar. Here two very central persons in the wider NGO community flatly rejected the idea. One argued that due to the lack of direct contact with the beneficiaries this would not be possible, and he further explained that as NGOs were already reluctant to coordinate among each other they would not like to see the beneficiaries in any such coordination arrangement (AF- PR131). The second director, at that time the chairman of ACBAR, was even more direct (AF-PR134), stating: '[I]t is utopia. The coordination bodies don't have any links to the community, so it is neither reasonable to suggest or possible to implement.'

A majority of the NGO directors could support the idea of common NGO programmes, but there was no overwhelming support for the idea of applying for common funding with other NGOs, and even less so with UN agencies. The same informers were asked to give their impression of the work and achievements of the coordinating bodies, including the UN one.

The following results emerged (see below in Table 7, but it should be noted that two NGO directors did not reply to these questions):

Coordination body	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	No info.
ACBAR	2	2	1		
ANCB		2			5
ICC					5
NCB	1	2	1		1
SWABAC	1				4
OCHA		2	1	1	1

**Table 7:** *Impression of Work and Achievements of Coordination Bodies*

**Source:** *Survey, Herat, 1999*

The main impression here is that the majority were neither impressed nor totally disappointed by the different coordination bodies, although they judged them to have achieved a fair performance. The acclaim for OCHA was related to their HMA coordination efforts, where in general all NGOs engaged in that field of work acknowledged their positive role.

### 8.1.3. Use of Sanctions

To test the degree of support for a more mandatory coordination arrangement the NGO directors were asked what sanctions they would support, if any, against members of NGO coordination bodies that refused to comply with commonly agreed standards and decisions. As noted in Table 8 below, only four of the seven directors

interviewed replied to this question, of whom one indicated support for one particular sanction.

Type of sanctions	I agree	I disagree
No sanctions		3
Written notification	4	
Temporary loss of membership in coordinating body	2	1
Permanent loss of membership in coordinating body	1	2
Notification of loss of membership to all NGOs	2	1
Notification of loss of membership to donors	3	
Notification of loss of membership to authorities	1	2
Request for donors to cut funding for the NGO	2	1
Request for the authorities to cut funding for the NGO	2	1

**Table 8:** *Use of Sanctions*

*Source:* Survey, Herat, 1999

Interestingly, amongst those responding to this question there was support for a certain degree of sanctions against members not complying with the rules of the coordinating body. The majority favoured more temporary sanctions, notifications to donors and requests for these (and other authorities) to cut finding for these NGOs.

#### 8.1.4. Regional NGO Coordination

These results, although recorded from a small but fairly representative selection of NGOs operating in Herat, illustrate a diversity of views on what activities the NGO coordinating bodies should be involved in, the degree of sanctions these bodies might apply to their members and the fact that their activities are fairly appraised by their members. What is evident, however, is a dislike for government involvement and their individual striving for independence, not least financially, from other agencies. The observation that donors are regarded as more useful for inclusion in coordination bodies than the authorities, and should be notified about sanctions imposed on members of coordination bodies, could indicate that NGOs are aware of their dependence on their donors.

The interviews do not, however, bring further clarity as to whether this is a compliant reaction to given realities or whether it is a strategy the NGOs would regard as positive in releasing further funding from donors. It should be noticed that the tension that was recorded between the NGO community and the Taliban authorities, as well as that between the national and the international coordination bodies, could influence NGO responses.

The general picture is that NGOs here at the regional level regard coordination of humanitarian assistance as important, but that the prime objective of participation in such arrangements is to gain information about the activities of other NGOs, and to have knowledge of the interaction between NGOs, the local authorities and the UN.

This latter knowledge could then form part of a common approach, if regarded as beneficial for individual agencies. The overall impression, however, is that the coordinating body is seen as representing collective NGO interests towards the other groups, if these do not infringe on the independence of individual NGO members. Given the way the regional NGO coordination is structured, it primarily deals with general information exchange; no particular thematic or sectoral groups were established specifically to address the needs and rights of forced migrants. Nor were there functional communication lines that could have brought such needs to the attention of other bodies; these could have represented or influenced others that might have had an impact on the situation for forced migrants in Western Afghanistan. The Herat coordination efforts were largely undertaken in isolation from national and international coordination efforts, thus limiting their ability to use such networks to improve the situation for forced migrants.

However, there were few examples of NGO projects planned and coordinated in advance of their implementation; one exception to this rule was initiated by a donor NGO, not the coordination body. What did unite the NGO community during the period of the fieldwork was a security incident, where, at least for some time, the NGO community adopted a common policy and pressurised the Taliban authorities to improve the security situation in Herat.

These observations seem to verify the general analysis made of the Afghan coordinating bodies, drawing on the general description provided by Bennett and Van Brabant (see chapter 3) and discussion in 6.2.8, of their emphasis on general information exchange and service provision rather than training, learning and collective planning.

## 8.2. National Coordination Arrangements

To expand on the findings among agencies based in Herat a survey was undertaken among members of national and regional NGO coordination bodies in Afghanistan.<sup>97</sup> The objective of the survey was to seek some general information on the NGO community, to test for variations of views recorded among NGOs in Herat and the generally held assumption on coordination issues, and further to seek NGO views on what degree of collaboration they would support among coordinating bodies, including a possible merger of the existing bodies into one NGO coordinating body.

### 8.2.1. NGOs' Comparative Advantages

One of the initial questions NGOs were asked related to what they regarded as the comparative advantages for NGOs working in Afghanistan. Here the answers could be divided into two categories: those who listed various advantages and those who justified an NGO presence in Afghanistan. For those emphasising the latter, importance was placed on NGOs having the capacity to assist needy people, for example, or to provide jobs for Afghans. In addition, a large number of respondents

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<sup>97</sup>Of the 99 NGOs that responded to the 252 distributed copies of the survey questionnaire, 88 were national NGOs, 11 Western NGOs, 2 Islamic NGOs and 3 donor NGOs.

argued that there was both the need, and room, for NGO intervention, since the Afghan government was currently not in a position to care for the needs of the Afghan people. As for comparative advantages of the NGO sector, the following were listed:

- Cost effective, flexible, dynamic and less bureaucratic.
- Able to reach remote areas.
- Independent of political influence and change.
- Long experience gained from working in Afghanistan, known and accepted by Afghan communities.
- Close to and knowledgeable about Afghan communities, including their socio-political and economic situation.
- Able to work towards the protection of human rights and the establishment of a democratic government.
- Being part of a civil society with a social agenda.

### **8.2.2. Relationship with Authorities**

NGO relationships with the Afghan authorities, which had been rather strained in Herat, were also of concern for NGOs at a national level. Of those responding to the survey, 40 agencies stated that they had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Taliban authorities at a national level, while as many as 56 had signed a MoU with local authorities.<sup>98</sup> A total of 55 NGOs stated that they kept the authorities informed of their activities at both the local and national levels. Only 13 NGOs at a national level and 4 at a local level had not established any form of contact with the authorities. While an almost equal number of ACBAR, ANCB, NCB and ICC members confirmed that they had signed a MoU and continued to keep the authorities informed of their activities, only 10 SWABAC members had signed a MoU at the national level, although 29 stated that they kept the authorities informed concerning their activities. This would tend to confirm the findings from Herat, where the authorities were kept informed, but at the same time, not so well informed that they might start to look into the details of NGO activities.

### **8.2.3. Usefulness of Different Coordination Activities**

The survey placed a major emphasis on how useful the NGOs found different coordination activities, the coordinating bodies' services to their members and what benefits they enjoyed from their membership in these bodies. The presentation below in Table 9 indicates the usefulness of coordination activities, ranked from not useful to very useful.

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<sup>98</sup> Notable here was a large number of SWABAC members based in Kandahar.

Coordination Activity	Not Useful	Partly Useful	Useful	Very Useful	No answer
Sharing of general information	1	4	42	51	1
Sharing of specific project information	3	22	47	25	2
Setting up thematic/debate groups ( e.g. on development or NGO perspective on human rights)	8	21	33	32	4
Presenting projects for other NGOs before implementation is decided	24	30	34	9	2
Agreeing on common standards and guidelines for NGOs	2	10	37	48	2
Setting of joint policies for NGOs	6	5	28	57	2
Agreeing on geographical areas where the NGOs should prioritise their work	35	17	21	24	2
Agreeing on priority field, e.g. health, for NGOs to work in	24	21	31	20	3
Agreeing on integrated programmes with other NGOs	6	17	48	26	2

**Table 9:** *Perceived Usefulness of Various Coordination Activities*

**Source:** *NGO Survey, 1999*

From the above it can be concluded that what NGOs found most useful was the sharing of general information, seeking agreement on common standards and guidelines and the setting of joint NGO policies. Moreover, they found the establishment of thematic/debate groups and the sharing of specific project information to be useful, as well as agreeing on integrated programmes with other NGOs. However, there was less support for the idea of presenting projects to other NGOs before deciding on implementation and agreeing on priority fields of engagement and geographical areas of work for NGOs.

The highest level of disagreement related to the notion of prioritisation of geographical work areas for NGOs; this was followed by an equal level of disagreement concerning the establishment of priority fields for NGOs to engage in, and presenting projects to each other before implementation is decided. All of these reservations were indicative of a fear among NGOs of a narrowing of their independence, or of threats to their funding opportunities.

The NGOs were requested to provide comments or additional remarks related to these questions. Several agencies suggested that monitoring and evaluation, carried out by either individual NGOs or a coordinating body, could greatly improve NGO performance. It was also noted that Western NGOs had reservations concerning membership of coordinating bodies, which was felt to pose a possible risk of compromising their independence from the authorities and the UN, undermining humanitarian ideals. Concerns were also expressed about the ineffectiveness of particular coordination arrangements that did not add value to the respective organisation's work.

When asked for their views on what type of services an NGO coordinating body should provide to their members, almost 60% of respondents listed, as a first priority, information sharing and facilitating contact and meetings between members (a forum for discussion). Thereafter, two services were cited, each of which was given fairly equal priority:

- Capacity building of NGOs, both technically and administratively;
- Advocacy work on behalf of the NGO community, and representation and negotiations with the Afghan authorities and donors, including assistance with fund-raising.

Certain respondents also mentioned the setting of guidelines, policies and standards, finding solutions to practical NGO problems and offering advice. This was qualified by a list of single proposals:

- Identifying the capacity of NGOs and resource persons.
- Sharing resources and expertise.
- Securing an even distribution of assistance.
- Organising needs assessment surveys in emergencies.
- Acting as an arbitrator in conflicts between NGOs.

Typically, as in Herat, the main concern of the majority of the NGO sector was to secure their own particular interest through the coordinating body, which they primarily saw as a service provider. There are, however, some interesting variations between the national and regional levels. NGOs at the national level were not fully supportive of the idea of sharing specific project information, as was the case in Herat, which might be attributed to the fact that this was seen as more useful for field-based agencies than for national offices more concerned with protecting their information when preparing their project proposals. The fact that more agencies in the national survey than in the Herat survey thought that agreeing on joint policies was very useful could again be attributed to the finding that NGO headquarters were more inclined to involve themselves in the setting of policies and less in practical project implementation. This again confirms the importance of making a clear differentiation between the types of coordination activity that should be undertaken at different coordination levels.

#### **8.2.4. Major Benefits from NGO Coordination Body Membership**

When asked about membership benefits, some informants responded with what they perceived to be the most useful coordination activities, although an even greater percentage (75 agencies) listed sharing of information and being part of a common NGO forum as their major benefit. A few NGOs valued prevention of project duplication, contact with the authorities, capacity building and fund-raising.

There were also critical voices questioning whether there were any benefits at all, and one respondent commented that the importance an NGO gave to their involvement with their respective coordinating body could be judged by the level of seniority of staff members sent to attend meetings.

Naturally following this question was an assessment of the performance of each of the different coordinating bodies, including OCHA as a reference. The result is presented below in Table 10.<sup>99</sup>

Coordination body	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	No info.
ACBAR	17	20	28	11	23
ANCB	12	18	24	6	39
ICC	11	15	7	4	62
NCB	8	10	7	1	73
SWABAC	10	10	19	36	25
OCHA	6	15	36	27	15

**Table 10:** Performance Rating of CBs

*Source:* NGO Survey, 1999

With the exception of SWABAC, the majority of NGOs rated the performance of the coordinating bodies as being somewhere between fair and good, although a much higher number of respondents recorded a poor performance rather than an excellent one. This can be seen as an indication of high dissatisfaction among members of these coordination bodies, not least when compared to the rating provided for the UN coordination agency, OCHA.

### 8.2.5. The Use of Sanctions

The NGOs were asked if an NGO coordination body should apply sanctions against members that refused to agree to or avoided following commonly agreed guidelines or decisions. If we exclude SWABAC members, there is a balance in favour of using sanctions, with 31 members supporting their use, while only 14 were against, and with a higher percentage of ANCB members (77 %) being supportive than ACBAR members (54 %). Of SWABAC members, however, 43 were against the use of sanctions, with only 7 members supporting it. No solid conclusions can be drawn from the differences between Afghan and non-Afghan NGOs, since the majority opposing the use of sanctions (the SWABAC members) and the majority supporting it (ANCB members) were all Afghan NGOs. However, it would appear that the use of sanctions is more frequently supported among members of national coordination bodies than among NGOs based in Kandahar. These findings might be explained by local circumstances, and possibly the fear that locally-based NGOs would be the first to be subjected to sanctions if the coordination bodies should merge, not least as SWABAC and the Taliban authorities quite closely collaborated on screening SWABAC members. That stated, however, there was overwhelming support for NGO coordinating bodies to represent the NGO community with the authorities, irrespective of their regional or national representation, with 88 agencies in favour

<sup>99</sup> For these findings it should be noted that there was a proportional overweight of SWABAC members in the survey, which can explain the dominant figures of their excellence rating.



and only 11 against, of which as many as 7 opposing representation were ACBAR members.

### 8.2.6. Coordination Efforts According to Level

NGOs were further requested to suggest the appropriateness of different types of coordination effort according to village, regional (as within country) and national level. The following was identified:

- Village level:** Coordination of single NGO projects is the priority.
- Regional level:** Setting out project priorities and cooperation with the Afghan authorities are clearly judged as most appropriate at the regional level. However, many agencies were also in favour of addressing cooperation with the UN and other coordinating bodies and of deciding on common policies.
- National level:** Deciding on common policy and cooperation between coordinating bodies and with the UN are judged as being best done at the national level, although here a fairly high number of agencies were of the opinion that cooperation with the Afghan authorities should also take place at the national level.

These findings form a progress from coordination of a single project via project prioritisation to the setting of common policies among NGOs, with importance being placed on relations with the authorities and UN agencies. As noted above in the survey findings, this is confirmed by priorities set by NGO respondents at the regional and national level. Interestingly enough, the survey placed less emphasis on collaboration with intended beneficiaries, community councils or civil society groups.

### 8.2.7. Coordination Among Coordination Bodies

On the question of the feasibility of having several coordination bodies, the NGOs were asked whether coordination could best be accomplished through one or several coordinating bodies. From their responses it became clear that views on this matter again differ between countrywide and regional coordinating bodies. Excluding the ICC and NCB in this comparison (due to low response from their members) the following was found:

The majority of members of countrywide coordinating bodies were in favour of establishing one coordination body. This proposal was supported by 58% of ACBAR and 59% of ANCB members, but only 14% of SWABAC members. One comment made by a proponent of a single coordination body structure was that ‘there is no need to duplicate coordination.’

The majority (84%) of members of one regional coordinating body, SWABAC, expressed a preference for a multi-coordinating body system. This proposal was supported by 41% of ANCB members, but only 25 % of ACBAR members.

The majority of the 49 agencies who expressed a preference for retaining several coordination bodies did see a very clear need for closer cooperation between the existing coordinating bodies, while 17 NGOs expressed reservations. Only five NGOs thought closer cooperation could best be achieved on an ad hoc basis and thus there was broad support for the establishment of mechanisms which could facilitate cooperation among NGO coordinating bodies on a more regular basis.

Choosing between types of practical arrangement and ways of facilitating cooperation, there was general support for establishing joint policies and strategies, resource sharing and meetings. Only a few agencies supported practical arrangements such as the sharing of premises and the establishment of a joint administration. Reservations expressed by certain respondents on such arrangements were that this could reduce the visibility of each coordinating body.

These findings confirm that while there is an understanding that the Afghan NGO sector might benefit from closer collaboration, individual organisations still prefer to maintain their own institutions as long as they manage to secure funding for their operations. Individual interests override collective interests, including among organisations that one could expect to have more altruistic reasons for their engagement.

### 8.3. Conclusion

Considering these field findings in the light of the theory outlined for coordination in general and NGO coordination in complex political emergencies in particular, they seem to confirm the dichotomy that emerges between the ideal notion of coordination and the practical difficulty of organising effective coordination of humanitarian assistance at the field level.

The NGOs are supportive of a general sharing of information, but resist efforts that might limit their independence and competitive advantages in seeking funds for their operations. Or, as one NGO respondent to the survey commented rather soberly: 'Individually all agencies publicly espouse agreement on coordination, but few actually do it in reality and some simply do not care.'

This again gives support to Bennett's argument (2000) that NGO coordination cannot be authoritarian in nature, in the sense that NGOs will strive to establish horizontal rather than hierarchical coordination structures. While in general NGOs will resist having decisions imposed upon them, as Bennett pointed out, there is still support for the imposition of a certain degree of sanctions if commonly decided rules and regulations are not abided by. However, any NGO which felt that such sanctions were unjust would be free to seek membership of another coordinating body, or to take the initiative to form a new body. The notion of seeing the NGO coordinating body as a service provider rather than a regulator for NGOs seems well documented; thus facilitation and consensus-based decisions are the only way forward if a degree of unity is to be maintained.

The disconnection between the different levels of NGO coordination, described as being a major characteristic of the NGO structure, seems well documented. Not only is the presence of separate regional coordination bodies an indication of such a structural disconnection, but there is furthermore a strong sense of competition between the national and regional bodies, with the latter feeling overrun by the former. Even when a national coordinating body is present at the regional level, that does not necessarily bridge this disconnection. The coordinator of ACBAR in Herat, for example, when asked about contact with their main office in Peshawar and other regional offices, commented (AF-PRO44): '[W]e don't know about the work in other parts.' The fact that only ACBAR, of the national coordination bodies, had any functioning regional entities, illustrates the disconnection between the field, the regions and the national level, not to mention the distance between the field and the international coordination bodies.

That disconnection is arguably also observed the other way around. Personnel undertaking regional and local coordination arrangements are most likely to be unaware of the guidelines and policies developed at the international level, and more inclined to focus on practical and more 'hands on' coordination issues. This was certainly observed in Herat, where the chair of the Regional Coordination Board did not receive any minutes from coordination or thematic/sectoral meetings taking place in Islamabad (Ofstad, Strand et al. 2001). What was perceived as the more political role of aid (Atmar 2001), not least following the introduction of UN sanctions, increased the distance between the NGOs and the UN, as NGOs no longer regarded the UN as a non-political entity in the Afghan aid environment.

The possible functions suggested for a coordination forum as identified by Van Brabant were only partially identified at the national and regional NGO coordination levels in Afghanistan. Whilst a division into member-oriented, information-focused, and task- and target-oriented functions was valid, a large range of what might have been more common and significant activities seem to have been missing. This included the lack of common strategy development, needs assessment, security management, common learning and planning, political analysis, common appeals (excluding participation in the UN-led CAP process) and more strategic management. The issue of common position and negotiation for consent within the wider NGO community was restricted by the presence of several NGO coordinating bodies, all representing different constituencies. Many of the elements that could have formed a common NGO position were therefore lacking in the Afghan humanitarian community, leaving it all rather fragmented, strategically weak and inclined to focus solely on the representation of their members' interests rather than on the wider challenges met by all humanitarian agencies operating in such a complex political emergency.

Arguably, such a fragmented coordination structure and NGO community will inevitably be less able to 'ensure awareness of a particular situation or problem, and thus be in a position to address the challenges in a coordinated manner in order to provide the most effective, cost efficient and sustainable responses' at the regional and national levels. This assumption presented in chapter 3.5, which forms the basis for suggesting that coordination of humanitarian assistance would provide additional benefits for forced migrants, seems largely unfulfilled and indicates a major weakness in the Afghan NGO coordination system. While UN coordination

structures are regarded as more effective than those of NGOs, there is still such a tension and distance between the UN and NGOs that there has not been any formalised and effective collaboration between these entities. The coordination efforts undertaken by the Taliban authorities were supported neither by the majority of NGOs and NGO coordination bodies, with the exception of SWABAC, nor by the UN, and thus did not provide any overall guidance on the Afghan humanitarian scene.<sup>100</sup>

However, there is reason to suggest that a more strongly enforced coordination system would not have been able to function in Afghanistan, as seen by the resistance to the suggestion of merging into one NGO coordination body and the weaknesses identified in the Principled Common Programming and Strategic Framework processes (Duffield, Gossman et al. 2001). Therefore, as argued in the theory section of this thesis, a facilitated coordination arrangement remained the only feasible option in such a complex political emergency. However, it should be recognised that while a more multi-faceted strategy might have been beneficial, the weaknesses of the coordination bodies in collecting and disseminating experiences and evaluations prohibited a more collective learning process and thus militated against any ability to develop and adjust an overall strategy. Arguably limiting NGOs' ability to further common standards and engage in advocacy activities, which was found to have been a major benefit of international coordination efforts. The fact that only a very few NGOs working in Afghanistan have engaged themselves in human rights issues, peacebuilding and advocacy activities might be seen as a confirmation of this observation.

If we revert to Herat and examine the knowledge NGOs hold of their intended beneficiaries, this raises further concern for the ability of the NGOs to respond to the needs of forced migrants. This includes the way NGOs organise interaction with community groups and single beneficiaries, how they define and appreciate community participation and how they select and prioritise projects for implementation. If such knowledge and understanding is lacking, there is arguably rather limited information to be shared and acted upon in the NGO coordinating bodies. It has, however, been documented that a more developmental approach to needs assessments appears to have a considerably greater effect in including the interests and views of intended beneficiaries in needs assessments. To a large extent the ability to recognise local resources and strengths, and to adjust projects in accordance with vulnerabilities identified among that particular group of forced migrants, is important also in complex political emergencies.

The field findings certainly challenge the author's suggested definition of NGO coordination in CPEs, where it was argued that NGOs' intention in coordinating their efforts would be to 'make provision of humanitarian assistance more effective, efficient and in accordance with the needs of their intended beneficiaries'. While effectiveness and efficiency might be important for many NGOs, little evidence is found to support the NGOs' stated aim of meeting the specific needs of their intended beneficiaries. Throughout the interviews and the survey, the NGOs'

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<sup>100</sup> By April 2000 both UN officials and Ministers of the Taliban Administration confirmed that the UN had withdrawn from their regular coordination meetings, thus vacating the only meeting point for trust-building and more preventive actions.

primary focus has been inward-looking, more concerned with whether or not the beneficiaries are in need of what the NGOs are in a position to provide rather than adjusting their service provision to meet the needs of their prospective beneficiaries. Such a position is echoed in the NGO coordination bodies, where the primary concern is to represent the interests of their member NGOs, rather than those of their intended beneficiaries.

These findings have certain ramifications for the sub-theses set out for this thesis, as some of the underlying assumptions seem not fully proven, and will therefore be discussed in more detail in the next and final chapter.

## 9. Conclusion

Following an introduction to theories on complex political emergencies, forced migration, non-governmental organisations and the coordination of humanitarian assistance, various coordination arrangements were discussed before field findings from Afghanistan were presented and analysed. The examination of coordination arrangements in complex political emergencies as well as the field findings revealed a rather more complex forced migration pattern where forced migrants were being denied the rights for protection and assistance they are entitled to according to international refugee conventions. The coordination of humanitarian assistance proved to be centred more on securing the operational interests of the NGOs than on ensuring the most efficient, effective and targeted assistance to the forced migrants.

Thus to conclude this thesis, there is a need in this concluding Chapter to return to the aims and objectives of this study, and to recall some major findings on the different issues examined before entering into a discussion on the validity of the main hypothesis as well as the sub-theses. Finally, a revised definition of what constitutes coordination of humanitarian assistance in complex political emergencies will be suggested.

### 9.1. Revisiting the Hypothesis and Summarising Main Findings

A starting point for the closing chapter is to revisit the initial hypothesis and factors expected to exert influence on NGOs' operational and strategical orientation. Then, having outlined the main objectives for this study, a summary of the main findings is provided in order to enable a discussion of the validity of the hypothesis.

#### 9.1.1. Recalling the Hypothesis

The main hypothesis for this thesis, as set out in the Preamble, was:

*The existing NGO coordination arrangement seems to serve primarily the interests of their NGO members, by promoting their organisational interests and facilitating interagency communication, rather than serving the interests of their intended beneficiaries. NGOs are willing to join a coordinating body, but they will remain reluctant to be directed by such a coordination structure if it limits their organisational independence.*

Moreover, a number of challenges were identified that were expected to influence the will and ability of the NGOs and their coordinating bodies' ability and commitment to seek a more commonly coordinated approach for provision of humanitarian assistance, and their willingness to factor the

ability of forced migrants or their views on and aspirations for assistance into the coordination processes. These were:

- A prevailing mistrust between NGOs and their coordinating bodies based on existing differences in culture, religion and organisational practice, as well as perceived influences on the NGOs from their external donors (groups, nations or regional actors) pursuing their individual political, military and/or financial interests; leading to competition between NGOs and their coordinating bodies on financial and organisational grounds.
- Unclear and divergent perceptions of what coordination implies, what distinguishes it from collaboration and cooperation, and whether it is best achieved through control or facilitation. Perceptions range from the informal sharing of information to joint execution of relief programmes and strategic planning; and from the need for a lead agency to coordinate humanitarian efforts, to a free-for-all approach.
- A lack of humanitarian and organisational professionalism within the NGO sector and within their coordination arrangements, and diverging views on their roles and relations towards states, donors and other humanitarian actors. In addition, possible objections against a wider coordination effort among humanitarian agencies based on the specialisation of single agencies or mandates serve to prevent formalised coordination efforts.
- Varying understandings of the importance of and willingness within the NGO community to allow forced migrants to take part in decision-making processes, and to make use of participatory methods to establish the needs and aspirations of this group of intended beneficiaries and, furthermore, to share and secure these interests among a wider range of humanitarian actors.

Furthermore, the data gathering was guided by the identified dependent and independent variables.

### **9.1.2. Main Findings of the Research Project**

As part of the research process a number of sub-objectives were identified to broaden the scope of the research. These include an examination of the particularities of complex political emergencies; the characteristics of forced migration in complex political emergencies; the typology of NGOs assisting forced migrants; the variety and characteristics of NGO coordination arrangements; and finally, a review of what characterised Afghanistan as a complex political emergency.

Through the review and analyses undertaken of these various sub-objectives a number of findings were identified, contributing towards discussion of the validity of the hypothesis and sub-theses, in which the following main findings might be highlighted.

### *Particularities of Complex Political Emergencies*

The term complex political emergency is rather open-ended and includes a very wide range of emergencies; humanitarian agencies seem to embrace the term rather than to question it as it provides room for a wide variety of interventions. They are, however, frequently prolonged emergencies in which the state function has been eroded or contested, often with a mix of ‘man’- and ‘god’-made disasters. In such situations needs will vary considerably, ranging from immediate life-saving measures to rehabilitation projects for the returning population and development efforts in areas of relative stability. Consequently, there might simultaneously be a requirement for the full range of humanitarian interventions to meet the needs of different groups of forced migrants in the same location.

Due to prevailing security concerns and often rapidly changing situations, NGOs have become the major service provider to victims of complex political emergencies, and, furthermore, the ones most frequently advocating the rights of forced migrants.

### *Characteristics of Forced Migration in Complex Political Emergencies*

While there are large numbers of victims of complex political emergencies, for this thesis the scope has been narrowed down to one particular group, forced migrants, who are eligible for protection and humanitarian support in accordance with international conventions. Certainly, as statistics of the UNHCR validate, complex political emergencies have led to massive forced migration in a number of countries, and certainly in Afghanistan. Here, we have witnessed a large degree of both forced and voluntary repatriation from neighbouring countries, providing further insight into migration processes.

That being stated, it is evident that it is virtually impossible to draw definitive lines between who can be defined as forced and voluntary migrants, leaving especially internally displaced persons in a vulnerable position, as national governments are often unable or unwilling to provide for them. The moral obligation then falls on the NGOs to assist such forced migrants, often in insecure and rapidly fluctuating circumstances.

The decision-making processes when people set out on flight, and the extent to which they embody individual or group decisions, are an important element in forced migration research. So is the ability of NGOs to regard forced migrants as social actors with individual needs rather than as a homogeneous group. That, again, focuses on the ability of NGOs to identify both resources and needs among the forced migrants they aim to assist, to ensure the effectiveness, timeliness and sustainability of such assistance.

### *Typology of NGOs Assisting Forced Migrants*

The number of and budgets for non-governmental organisations have increased dramatically over recent decades as they became the favoured implementers of humanitarian assistance in complex political emergencies. There is, however, no



definite definition of what an NGO is, except that it is not a governmental entity and that it is associated with a non-profit philosophy and a degree of voluntarism. There are, thus, a wide variety of NGOs specialised in various fields of assistance provision. This ranges from advocacy work and a focus on protection of the rights of forced migrants, via provision of a wide range of humanitarian assistance to those NGOs that have concentrated on specific areas of work, such as delivery of emergency relief or provision of medical assistance.

Many NGOs portray themselves as ‘the civil society’, although this diverse group of organisations might be better understood as one of many elements of such a civil society, with very large variations as to how representative they are of the constituencies they claim to represent.

Thus, NGOs need to devise a methodology for their interaction with and their ability to assess the needs of forced migrants. This might range from a rights-based approach, where the rights rather than the needs of the forced migrants are addressed, via various survey methods to more participatory resource and needs assessments. Central here is the ability of the NGOs to include the different types of forced migrant in their needs assessments, not least women, children and minorities, and to accord priority to their requests when projects are planned, implemented and evaluated. Based on the field findings, it is questionable whether NGO interventions really are inclined to meet the primary needs of their intended beneficiaries, or rather to supply them with what the NGOs are specialised in providing.

### *Variety and Characteristics of NGO Coordination Arrangements*

NGO coordination arrangements are found at different levels, ranging from the international to the local, although a characteristic of NGO coordination is that it is totally fragmented, not a unified international coordination structure with a common aim, structure and leadership.

One proposition in the literature is that to be effective coordination will need a degree of enforcement and a hierarchical structure. That is certainly not the case for NGO coordination, which is found to be consensus-based with a horizontal organisational model. Thus frequently, when NGOs relate to UN coordination arrangements, which are more directive, this causes friction and conflicts and statements of the type made by UN officials in Afghanistan that ‘coordinating NGOs is like herding cats.’

The voluntary character of NGO coordination and the large diversity within the NGO sector might inevitably lead to the establishment of a wide variety of NGO coordination arrangements. Each coordinating body is primarily established to secure the interests of specific NGO groups, to facilitate information sharing and communication and to provide a degree of service for the members.

While practical project coordination activities are most frequently found at the village and district level, issues of NGO policy and relations with donors, UN agencies and authorities will predominantly be addressed at the national level, while common standards and codes of conduct are on the agenda of the international NGO

coordinating bodies. A major weakness of NGO coordination arrangements is certainly the disconnection that exists between these different coordination levels, limiting both up and downward communication and exchange.

What is furthermore identified in the different countries and coordination bodies reviewed for this thesis is that forced migrants are not actively involved in any of the coordination arrangements, and thus their views and needs will need to be presented and represented by single NGO members of such coordination arrangements.

### *Afghanistan as a Complex Political Emergency*

Afghanistan can certainly be defined as a complex political emergency, and a prolonged one, that has forced Afghans to migrate throughout different stages of the long-lasting conflict. Not only have a range of different types of NGOs been actively involved in provision of humanitarian assistance since the early 1980s, NGO coordinating bodies were established from the mid-1980s. Some have a national coverage while others were established by NGOs operating in a particular region of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has seen a range of shifting regimes over the years and the NGOs have either generally opposed them or at least avoided being too closely associated with them, although different types of NGO have adopted different strategies. However, the international community has certainly used humanitarian assistance as a political tool to challenge such Afghan authorities, and the majority of the NGOs have over time, although to varying degrees, accepted such a politicised role as long as that secured them a degree of funding. Thereby, as when NGOs did not protest against the closure of borders or political registration of refugees, they indirectly accepted setting aside the rights of the forced migrants.

The degree of stability that certain parts of the country experienced from the mid-1990s onwards led to repatriation, resettlement, and the need for the NGO community to move towards more rehabilitation and development oriented assistance. In recent years, however, recurring fighting and a severe drought forced new groups of Afghans to seek refugee or work opportunities in neighbouring countries.

### *Field Findings*

At the village level it was evident that NGO assistance hardly matched the requirements of the forced migrants when returning from exile in Iran. There were very large variations as to how NGOs contacted and collaborated with local communities and the degree that these were involved in deciding on humanitarian interventions and in project implementation. The main finding was that the NGOs ended up doing what they were specialised in or provided assistance from their already established project portfolios. The demand each NGO had for establishment of a separate community organisation, a *shura*, to relate to, further divided the community rather than allowing them to influence NGO programming.

Little evidence was found of active sharing of information on the needs of the forced migrants through the coordination bodies. Rather, on the national level a reluctance was documented as to information sharing of such specific information which NGOs regarded as important for their own fund-raising.

No specific attempts were identified at either the regional or national level in Afghanistan to incorporate representatives of forced migrants in coordination arrangements; there was rather an opinion that such inclusion would not be very helpful for coordination efforts. Thus the focus for the research was at this stage shifted towards the investigation of more general coordination activities. While information sharing was supported at both the regional and national level, there was more resistance against sharing project-specific information and against applying sanctions to members not complying with guidelines or regulations. In sum, the NGOs expected the NGO coordinating bodies to provide them services, though without individual members having to give up their independence or provide sufficient information that others could use it for their own fund-raising purposes.

## 9.2. Validity of Hypothesis and Sub-theses

Before discussing the main hypothesis, it seems feasible to review first the five sub-theses as outlined in the Preamble, which were expected to influence NGOs' and the NGO coordinating bodies' ability and commitment to seek a more commonly coordinated approach for the provision of humanitarian assistance, and thereby their willingness to include forced migrants, or at least ensure that their views on and aspirations for assistance were presented and reflected upon in the coordination processes.

### 9.2.1. A Prevailing Mistrust Between NGOs and NGO Coordinating Bodies

The first sub-thesis pointed towards the possibilities of a prevailing mistrust between NGOs and their coordinating bodies. This was based on differences in culture, religion and organisational practice. It was furthermore suggested that pressure from external donors might exacerbate such competition between single NGOs and NGO coordination bodies.

The Afghan case seems fully to confirm all of the suggested biases for mistrust between single NGOs and NGO coordinating bodies. As for the issues of culture difference, an example was the fear of Western indoctrination of the Afghan refugee population leading to the establishment of ICC. Religious differences contributed to the mistrust Western NGOs expressed towards Islamic NGOs, not least due to a lack of understanding of the *zakat* tradition. Turning to differences in organisational practice, one relevant example is the mistrust expressed by ACBAR staff as to the more formal interaction developed between Afghan-based coordinating bodies and the Taliban authorities, especially in Kandahar. In addition comes a degree of mistrust based on personal enmity and perceived attitudes towards what are regarded as political or religious biases.

More important altogether is the exclusion of major Muslim donor countries from the donor-run Afghan Support Group, and that frequently only two coordinating bodies, the ACBAR and the British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), were invited to their meetings. This cemented an understanding among Islamic and Afghan NGOs that external donors actively contributed towards maintaining a high degree of mistrust between NGOs and NGO coordinating bodies.

### **9.2.2. Unclear or Diverting Views of what Coordination Implies**

The second sub-thesis suggested that NGO coordination suffered from unclear and divergent perceptions of what coordination implies. It was suggested that NGOs might have been rather unclear as to whether they wished to enter into a more permanent NGO coordination arrangement or only accept varying degrees and forms of collaboration and cooperation. Likewise, it was questioned whether they would accept a degree of control in such arrangements or stick to a facilitated coordination approach.

While certainly large differences were identified as to activities undertaken by the different coordination bodies, a common agreement seems to remain on the necessities of what a coordination arrangement should facilitate. This was a sharing of basic information between agencies and the provision of a common meeting-point for the different NGOs, and, furthermore, an organisation that could provide a limited range of service to its members, like representing members and their interests with the authorities. Depending on the activity level of the Board and the management of the coordination body, and certainly on their financial situation, other activities might be added, such as establishing a project database, external information sharing and various training opportunities for member agencies.

Basically, it was found that NGOs support a facilitated coordination arrangement, though the majority of the members of Afghan-based coordination bodies accept a degree of sanctions being imposed on members violating commonly agreed norms and regulations.

Certainly, and of importance for this thesis, none of the national or local Afghan coordination arrangements reviewed had taken on any specific role of either protecting or assisting forced migrants. Internationally, the Sri Lankan coordination body, the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, had initiated a project to advocate the basic rights of internally displaced people, although it was at an infant stage. Still, the main concern of NGO coordination bodies focused on assisting members of their own NGO constituency, and advocating attention to and funding for particular projects or events of their member NGOs, wherein support for forced migrants might be one element.

Thus, to concluded on this sub-thesis, rather than holding unclear and divergent views on coordination it is rather that each coordination arrangement, based on its activities, finances and personnel, will try to adopt a service that is targeted to meet its primary needs for information exchange and services to uphold its activities. The basic limitations on expanding a coordination arrangement, either internally or towards other coordinating bodies, will be NGOs striving for independence and to

counter efforts that might limit their ability to seek funding for their own operations. Distinctions between what might be defined as collaboration, cooperation or coordination seem rather irrelevant, as NGOs generally define any type of formalised and organised cooperation between NGOs as a coordination arrangement.

### **9.2.3. A Lack of Professionalism Within the NGO Sector**

The third sub-thesis suggested a lack of humanitarian and organisational professionalism within the NGO sector and their coordination arrangements, and a striving to maintain a rather narrow and interest-based specialisation of NGO coordinating bodies. It also pointed to divergent views on the roles and relations NGOs and their coordinating bodies should establish towards states, donors and other humanitarian actors.

The NGO sector is certainly very diverse, lacking a common definition of what an NGO is, except that it (officially) is not a government entity. Naturally then, many organisations terming themselves NGOs might have a very sketchy understanding of what professionalism in the humanitarian and professional field might imply. The mushrooming of NGOs in Afghanistan by the late 1980s is an example of how easy it is to be registered as an NGO, and how less inclined the NGO coordinating bodies are to set membership criteria that really limit their membership base. The criterion of a certain budget level is hardly a measurement of professionalism or understanding of humanitarian values, although a demand for audited reports and registration with the authorities and the UN might secure a certain degree of organisational professionalism.

In any case, the general argument of a lack of professionalism cannot easily be applied to the wider NGO community, and not to any one particular group of NGOs operating in Afghanistan. Afghan demining NGOs are judged to be among the most professional worldwide, some of the Islamic NGOs have a strong international presence, and one of the Western NGOs is a Nobel Prize-winner. And most or all multinational NGOs are present. Nevertheless, within all these groups are also NGOs that have shown less of either an humanitarian attitude or a professional management capability, but rather have held to a political agenda, been extremely corrupt or have just not been able to run a project in a manner satisfactory for anyone except their own management staff.

What certainly might increase professionalism within the NGO sector is extensive use of impact assessments and evaluations to determine where there is a need for improvements, followed by training of NGO staff to improve individual skills and the organisational capacity. A general lack of evaluations, and certainly sharing among NGOs of those conducted, combined with very limited training opportunities provided by the Afghan coordinating bodies does certainly inhibit development of more professional NGOs.

Arguably, specialisation within a specific field of work might not be negative if this could promote a higher professional standard and, for a coordinating body, greater commonality and understanding among the members. If a division of the NGO community is based on professional and interest criteria it provides a more natural

division of responsibility within the wider sector. The Aceh province can form an example here, where the professional orientation of the NGO groups (such as advocacy, human rights and environment) was the basis for their specialisation. On the other hand, a separation, as found in Afghanistan, based on nationality and religion might not contribute towards such common goals, but rather further divide the NGO community and establish a self-perpetuating competition and rivalry. Certainly lacking in all areas researched was a coordinating body especially devoted to promoting the rights and interests of forced migrants; not even at the international scene had NGOs specialising in this field found it necessary to form such a common coordinating body.

As pointed out in the literature review on civil society, NGOs will adopt very different relations with any given state, depending on their mandates and the role the state assumes in each complex political emergency. An NGO promoting the rights of citizens will naturally end up in conflict with an authoritarian state that suppresses human rights, as was documented in the Aceh province of Indonesia. NGOs that are community-based and advocacy-oriented are likely to end up in confrontation with any authority, while NGOs that only provide emergency relief goods might find ways of dealing with the same authorities, even conceding to their demands to enable delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The main question related to the ability of NGOs to analyse each specific complex political emergency, whom they chose to represent and how they might find room to manoeuvre and influence the various stakeholders. It could forcefully be argued that by withdrawing from a scene where there is a need for humanitarian intervention, the opportunity both to aid those in need and to influence those who might improve the situation is terminated, although the security risk to NGO staff certainly need to be taken into account here. Thus, arguably there is no blueprint for the role NGOs assume towards states, non-state actors or donors. That will fully depend on the mandate of each NGO, the specific context in which they operate and the extent to which they are prepared to defend and present the case of those they are set to assist. In such cases, professionalism cannot be judged according to budget or glossy folders, but by the extent to which NGOs are actually able to bring about change for their intended beneficiaries.

#### **9.2.4. Inclusion of Forced Migrants in Setting Priorities**

The last sub-thesis suggested that there is a varying willingness among NGOs to allow for forced migrants to be involved in decision-making processes and needs assessments to establish their resources, needs and aspirations, and differing NGO perceptions of the importance of doing so. The same considerations apply to single NGOs willingness to share such information within the wider NGO community.

This sub-thesis seems largely confirmed by the hesitance NGOs showed towards involving not only forced migrants but intended beneficiaries at large in their decision-making processes and certainly in the Afghan case, in the NGO coordinating bodies. No evidence whatsoever was found of initiatives from the NGOs or NGO coordinating bodies to include their beneficiaries in more structured

and collective consultation processes, except when the NGOs conducted their needs assessments.

When it came to NGOs' use of more participatory needs assessment methodologies, there were some variations, although the majority of the NGOs interviewed relied on single surveys or 'light' participatory methods. Most negative towards any beneficiary involvement were the demining agencies, and most positive the development-oriented NGOs. However, in a complex political emergency like Afghanistan the latter group was in the minority, and the majority of the NGOs were involved in emergency relief and service provision, Afghan and international NGOs alike.

This practice of beneficiary exclusion is then compounded by agencies' resistance to sharing information about the needs of forced migrants and other intended beneficiaries if they see this as reducing their funding and marketing opportunities.

### **9.2.5. Addressing the Main Hypothesis**

Having examined the sub-theses, and argued that these are to varying degrees fulfilled, attention needs to be drawn to the main hypothesis. Here it was postulated that the primary function of an NGO coordination arrangement was for promoting the interests of their members rather than of their intended beneficiaries. It was further argued that they would only seek membership of coordinating bodies seen to promote their individual interests, though avoid arrangements that might limit their organisational independence.

Given the above presentations of main findings and the partial fulfilment of the sub-theses, the main hypothesis seems to have been well documented. A starting point is the examples of how NGOs at the village level demanded separate community structures to relate to, rather than promoting and strengthening existing ones that to a larger extent could have secured the villagers' ability to coordinate the various NGO activities in the village, and thereby NGOs' decision-making. The functioning of the NGO coordination structure both in Herat and at the national level all seems to confirm that their primary functions were to promote the interests of their members. Notable here is the difference in forms of coordination arrangements established by and between NGOs, states, the UN and donors, which confirms that NGOs will resist being forced into more authoritarian coordination arrangements. An exception must be made for very specialised and technical coordination tasks, such as for Humanitarian Mine Action, when seen as a precondition for securing funds. The disconnection that exists between different coordination levels is another important finding, as it arguably limits the possibility of scaling up coordination efforts from the local to the national level.

On the positive side, it might be added that the entire NGO coordination structure will have to be flexible, adapt and adjust to the organisational and professional challenges NGOs meet in the different complex political emergencies. If not, new coordination structures will replace old ones, members will limit their involvement or donors will end their funding.

These findings, however, imply rather definite limitations to what NGO coordination arrangements might be able to achieve. That being stated, one should not undervalue the importance of information sharing in complex political emergencies, where both general information on the humanitarian and political situation and more specific information on humanitarian needs might be highly politicised or difficult to obtain. Security concerns will frequently influence NGO decision-making, and thus such types of information might be instrumental for NGOs to plan and execute their humanitarian operations.

As noted, the state might in such complex political emergencies either be weak, contested or opposed by other political and military groups seeking influence. In any case, it seems important that NGOs are aware of strategies adapted by other NGOs and humanitarian actors. Some NGOs might take on a confrontational role, as they wish to protect the interests of particular groups, while others might wish to accommodate the interests of state and non-state actors to ensure their ability to continue their humanitarian activities. While no definite suggestion can be made of what is the preferred position here, not least as NGOs' mandates will vary, a NGO coordinating body might at least be a forum for such discussions and allow for an understanding within the NGO community of why different NGOs seek different forms of engagement. In many ways, NGOs' relationship with UN agencies, and to some extent the donors, is marked by a similar degree of divergence. NGOs obtaining funding from these sources for their projects would easily fall silent if disagreeing with their policies, while the unsupported NGOs would be more likely to maintain their critique. Unfortunately, the same vigorous disagreements, at least in Afghanistan, were lacking when it came to debating relations with civil society groups and intended beneficiaries. This is, however, understandable in the context of coordination as analysed here, as such groups do not constitute any major threat to their operations or fundraising.

The definition and differentiation of the various theories suggested in respect of collaboration, cooperation, coordination and competition seem difficult to verify. While competition, both for resources, influence and recognition, is an element identified in all types of collaboration, coordination and competition, in itself it is not a formalised way of organising NGO activities but rather of consistently influencing and limiting them. Nor does the notion that coordination is associated with a forced and hierarchical coordination structure with a central role for one organisation, as suggested by Banham (2001), seem to reflect NGOs' coordination arrangements; on the contrary, these are all facilitated and more horizontally organised. The notion, as proposed by Robinson, Hewitt et al. (2000), that only states engage in coordination, while civil society, NGOs included, seek cooperation, does not seem to be justified either, but rather that coordination is a more formalised form for cooperation between different humanitarian actors in a specific area or for a specific purpose. Here, the field findings seem rather to support Hvinden's (1994) suggestion that coordination is to ensure that units, presupposed to act in a coordinated manner, are brought to operate in a more harmonious way, while cooperation relates to the execution of a particular task, and collaboration is to work together on a joint task. More than relating the definition of coordination to the exercise of authority, it seems more justified to debate the degree of formality in the various forms of formalised collaboration between humanitarian actors.



A factor not to be underestimated, though less difficult to pinpoint, is the ability of individual NGO staff members to make a difference in coordination arrangements and bodies. This ability may be positive, when individuals set forth to promote coordination and to establish well functioning collaboration between single NGOs and coordination among wider NGO groups. The Kabul Emergency Group established in the mid-1990s, encompassing both NGOs and UN agencies, is such an example. It may conversely be negative, when individuals block attempts to forge coordinated initiatives or when conflicts within members of coordinating bodies block any decisions from being made or even lead to a major split between members. This was certainly the case with ACBAR in 1999, when the conflict between the Executive Director and the Chairman evolved into a confrontation between Afghan and international NGOs, and a further rift in the organisation. Additionally, if individuals or groups wish to use the coordination body as a tool in a conflict or to promote a particular view, such as opposition to the Taliban, the organisation is likely to be split or rendered ineffective as such conflicts might reduce members' willingness to engage and share information with other members. Attempts to dominate and control will thus lead either to reduced activities and a more passive NGO community, or to a break-up of the coordination body, of which the establishment of SWABAC and ANCB might be seen as valid examples.

It could be suggested, based on the degree of support identified at the national coordination level for setting joint policies and establishing common standards and guidelines, that this is an under-explored opportunity that might add increased value to such coordination arrangements. Setting such joint policies is not regarded as threatening by most NGOs, but rather as tools to guide them in their different humanitarian interventions rather than definitive rules to be enforced. Arguably, then, issues addressing the rights and protection of forced migrants could be addressed at a policy level, as was actually done by the Sri Lankan coordination body.

It seems further well documented that only to a very limited extent have the views of forced migrants been allowed to influence the decision-making of the NGOs operating in Afghanistan, and to an even more limited extent have their views been conveyed into the information exchange and decision-making processes in the NGO coordinating bodies. However, when this is done, such as the sharing of information about the increased forced repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran, there is less evidence of such knowledge and understanding being more effectively acted upon if shared through a coordination body.

While this is valid for the vast majority of NGOs and for the operations of most NGO coordinating bodies, there are, however, some positive examples where lessons might be learnt. The developmental and participatory approach adopted by one international NGO in Herat and by several of the more development-oriented NGOs operating on a national basis in Afghanistan seems to include their intended beneficiaries, like forced migrants, actively in their decision-making processes. Their long-term engagement in Afghanistan and their establishment of formalised collaborative structures with their intended beneficiaries were found to be contributing factors to this more inclusive strategy. Such long-term engagement and the possibility NGOs have for building more lasting relations with intended

beneficiaries and civil society groups are, actually, one undervalued positive feature of such prolonged emergencies. Moreover, in these cases, and especially when one more development-oriented donor is involved, an exchange of information does take place among involved organisations. In general, however, similar information sharing and planning through a formalised coordinating body seems lacking, which is probably attributable to how these coordination bodies organise their activities and to the inherent competition among NGOs.

As a main conclusion it seems well documented that some types of NGO coordination effort will both be helpful, accepted by the majority of the NGOs and improve the situation for forced migrants in complex political emergencies. However, NGO coordination is not in itself a guarantee for ensuring the timeliness, efficiency and relevance of humanitarian assistance provided by NGOs in complex political emergencies. That might be achieved when either the coordination arrangement specifically addresses issues related to the rights of forced migrants, or the information sharing organised through the coordination arrangement leads to a better informed NGO community, possibly adopting joint policies and strategies for their interventions.

Though, it could be suggested, based on the degree of support identifies at the national coordination level for setting joint policies and establishment of common standards and guidelines, that this is an under explored opportunity that might add increased value to such coordination arrangements. Setting of such joint policies is not regarded as threatening to most NGO, but rather a tool to guide them in their different humanitarian interventions rather than definitive rules to be enforced.

It might be argued that the main limitations for the NGO sector in improving their assistance delivery are probably their limited understanding of what resources or insights the forced migrants hold for improving their own situation, and the competition for funding and attention that inevitably exists between NGOs operating in complex political emergencies. The first limitation might possibly be reduced as knowledge and experience of more development-oriented NGOs are shared within the wider NGO community. However, the second limitation might be expected to prevail and thus limit possible improvements even if single NGOs do their best to share the limited information they hold.

### 9.3. A Realistic Approach to Coordination in Complex Political Emergencies

Based on the above findings, primarily from Afghanistan, a more realistic approach and understanding of NGO coordination should be advocated. This approach should then replace the either profoundly idealistic hopes for what coordination can achieve that is frequently found in the literature, or the negative attitude that coordinated efforts will not yield much impact at all, a view so frequently promoted by both academics and field staff. Negative experiences from a number of coordination arrangements, so frequently quoted, seem here just to confirm the gap between the idealism and cynicism that is such a typical feature of the humanitarian assistance community.

As a starting point, this should lead to a rephrasing of the definition of coordination in complex emergencies the author presented in Chapter 3, whereby the primary objectives of meeting the needs of their intended beneficiaries should be changed to:

*Coordination is a process and a tool, whereby non-governmental organisations through structured interaction with other humanitarian, political and civilian entities attempt to ensure a degree of information sharing and service provision for members. Such efforts might ultimately improve the delivery and targeting of humanitarian assistance in complex political emergencies.*

The notion that organisations can work in tandem and abandon their competition for funding and suspicion of NGOs emerging from other cultures, traditions and religions seems almost unachievable in the current politicised humanitarian environment, and not least in complex political emergencies. Thus, it will be suggested that a more realistic approach to NGO coordination should be presented to form a more realistic notion of what degree of coordination it might be possible to establish between NGOs providing humanitarian assistance in countries and areas defined as complex political emergencies.

Initially, it could be beneficial to list what NGOs will resist or simply avoid being drafted into:

- NGOs cannot be forced to join coordination bodies, either by fellow NGOs, by UN agencies or by donors if they cannot count on receiving tangible and lasting financial rewards. While a state might hold the necessary authority to enforce such a coordination arrangement, doing so might not be beneficial for their wider relief, rehabilitation and development efforts if it leads to a withdrawal of NGOs from the country or area.
- Coordination by force will not be accepted by NGOs if such arrangements are not seen as securing funding or adding a positive element to the work of individual NGOs, as in HMA. If such a model is imposed on NGOs these are likely to either withdraw from the coordination body or establish a new one.
- NGOs will resist being directed to move to certain geographical areas or to assist particular groups of beneficiaries or provide a specific type of assistance, not least if the security of staff might be under threat or it reduces the prospects of financial and organisational benefits.
- NGOs will try to avoid collaborating with UN agencies or military entities if this is seen to infringe on their independence or to present such joint efforts as a political rather than a humanitarian effort, which again might increase the security risk.

What then can be identified as achievable coordination efforts and arrangements in complex political emergencies are the following:

- NGOs will accept coordination efforts that keep them informed about the activities of other NGOs, about the political and humanitarian situation in different parts of the country or area they are operating in, and about

policies and strategies of UN agencies, donors, authorities and opposition groups.

- NGOs will support the establishment of a NGO coordination body if this provides them with information and a degree of services, ranging from organising meetings to representing the NGO community with the authorities.
- NGOs will provide a certain degree of information about their projects to the coordination body, but primarily on projects already implemented or under implementation.
- NGOs will take part in information sharing on situations in particular geographical areas and participate in thematic groups, as long as this results in no more than general recommendations and policy statements.
- NGOs will accept the development of common standards and guidelines for the NGO sector, as long as not accompanied by strict sanctions for non-compliance.

There is further reason to believe that an added coordination activity acceptable to a majority of the NGOs would be the establishment of thematic groups for the development of policies and strategies for the wider NGO sector, such as those issued relating to the rights and needs of forced migrants.

These basic coordination efforts and arrangements would be achievable and a positive element in most complex political emergencies. A range of further activities might be added on if promoted by individuals or groups of agencies inclined to promote a more formalised arrangement, and to set separate NGO interests aside for the common good for their intended beneficiaries. That would, however, require a higher degree of trust between the involved NGOs, and more of a shared humanitarian vision.

A final reflection, to revert to the field, is to suggest that it is even more important for both single NGOs and NGO coordinating bodies to be able to present themselves, their aims and objectives to those they wish to assist, so as to ensure that the intended beneficiaries are aware of what these agencies actually intend to provide for them. That could possibly reduce the likelihood of forced migrants replying that ‘Maybe God knows what they are doing’, when asked about NGO activities, and thus enable a degree of dialogue between those who are in need of assistance and those with a mandate to provide it.

## Appendix 1: Coordination of Humanitarian Mine Action

The most prominent example of a forced coordination arrangements accepted by NGOs is the coordination of Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA), where NGOs, in general, don't oppose being coordinated by a UN led agency and where there is an agreement on the advantages of such a coordination structure.

While landmines have been a major problem for centuries, Humanitarian Mine Action is, however, a rather new field for NGOs to engage in, as mine clearance was solely regarded as a military task until the early 1990s,<sup>101</sup> but was then expanded to include humanitarian and developmental aspects as in the following four components (UNMAS 1998):

- Mine clearance, including minefield survey, mapping and marking,
- Mine-awareness, risk-reduction education,
- Victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration,
- Advocacy to stigmatise the use of landmines.

The latter effort has been particularly successful, not least due to the work undertaken by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) that led to the signing of the Ottawa Convention on March 1, 1999 (ICBL 2002).

Within the United Nations HMA is coordinated by the United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS 1998), and there is a close collaboration with other UN agencies.<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, there are no NGOs in the core group, despite the fact that there are only a few major NGO demining agencies, like the Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) (2002) and the HALO Trust (2002), that are engaged world-wide and which, effectively, undertake most of the actual demining.

At the country level the coordination responsibility is assigned to Mine Action Centres (MACs), which are either established by the national government or a United Nations agency (such as UNDP or OCHA), or, as in BiH, by the UN on behalf of the government (Harpviken, Millard et al. 2001: 48). The tasks of the MAC are quite wide-ranging and include (UNMAS, op.cit.),

- Surveys and assessments.
- The development of a national strategy plan for dealing with the mine threat.
- The setting of standards.

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<sup>101</sup> The author attended a meeting organised by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in 1991 where they announced their readiness to fund NGOs taking part in demining operations.

<sup>102</sup> These UN agencies are FAO; OCHA; UNICEF; UNDP; UNOPS; WFP and WHO; who then specialise in different fields within HMA

- Monitoring, quality assurance and, at times, financial control,
- The accreditation of implementing agencies, such as NGOs and commercial companies.

In a sense the MAC control all aspects of the NGO engagement from accrediting agencies, deciding upon which type of demining efforts should be prioritised, which areas they are to demine, which protocol for demining they are to use and finally, controls whether the demining task has been conducted in accordance with the protocol.

A closer review of the HMA coordination in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan does, however, reveal some significant differences from other humanitarian coordination arrangements (for details on these two operations see Harpviken et.al. (op.cit)). Firstly, all agencies are working within the same field of operations, which again, has very strict security procedures to be followed due to the high level of danger the handling of mines and unexploded devices (UXOs) poses to staff. Secondly, the majority of management staff are former military officers more familiar with operating within an hierarchical than a horizontal command structure. Thirdly, there is an acceptance of the need for an independent tasking and quality assurance mechanism that can ensure that the actual demining is undertaken in accordance with assigned tasks and mines destroyed and not just stockpiled or sold off. Fourthly, the MAC is not operational, and thus not competing for funds (except administratively) with the agencies it is set to coordinate.

What has brought about resistance against the MAC system from a few NGO demining agencies in Afghanistan, is that funding for their operations has been channelled through the MAC rather than donors establishing a direct funding relationship with each individual NGO. The argument used against this funding practice, as frequently heard in Afghanistan, is that the coordination arrangement claims to large administrative overhead which otherwise could have been utilised for actual demining.<sup>103</sup> The counterargument has been that not only will this practice enhance the coordination ability of the MAC, it will further be a guarantee for the donors that their funding is spent in accordance with their intentions and not on other activities of the NGOs (or their Directors).

Certainly, the importance emphasised by Reindorp and Wiles (2001) of being able to limit the number of humanitarian actors and ensure the quality of their work, is an important feature of the HMA operation and one might assume that those agencies that have been accepted, might resist changes in these regulations, as they guarantee their occupation and funding. A loss of financial independence might then be a lesser price to pay, since such a coordination arrangement actually provides a degree of financial security. Given the military background of many NGO employees (as also those of commercial demining companies) they are probably also more in favour of accepting rigid rules and regulations, than someone with a background from a humanitarian organisation.

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<sup>103</sup> The one to most vigorously promote this view is the Director of OMAR, an Afghan demining agency.

Adding to the acceptance of the MAC, is the service function it actually renders to the NGOs, which is the added value that it brings into the collaboration. Included here are the surveys done to map the mine-problem, the database that is kept over cleared areas and the maps that are produced for both mine contaminated and cleared areas. Such tasks would be too large for a single NGO to undertake on their own and too risky from both a security and funding perspective, if each NGO did not know where the others were engaged or which areas had been cleaned. The other element of the MAC, already mentioned, is that it is not operational, so it does not challenge the demining agencies over the actual demining jobs, just serves to lessen their bureaucratic burden.

According to NPA (op.cit) Mine Action as defined by the United Nations refers to

*(...) all those activities geared towards addressing the problems faced by populations as a result of landmine contamination. It is not so much about mines as it is about people and their interactions with a mine-infested environment. Its aim is not technical - to survey, mark and eradicate landmines - but humanitarian and developmental - to recreate an environment in which people can live safely, in which economic, social and health development can occur free from the constraints imposed by landmine contamination, and in which victims' needs are addressed.*

It is therefore very interesting to note that in both Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina the coordination of HMA activities through the MAC system were despite this brief, found to operate in parallel with the general coordination system, rather than being an integral part of it. This limitation on the interaction between humanitarian agencies comes despite the fact that demining is very often the first step in a larger resettlement strategy, which means that a number of humanitarian agencies depend on a successful demining operation before they can start anything from agricultural rehabilitation to building of schools and clinics. Or, for that matter, provision of drinking water and more than that, the fear of the presence of mines might have a devastating effect on migrants will or wish to even return to their home areas, where these services are to be delivered.

Interviews with HMA staff and members of NGO coordinating bodies in these locations, however, revealed that they regarded HMA as a specialised task rather than an integrated part of the wider relief or recovery activities. The view of the ICVA coordinator in Sarajevo was that the MAC handled HMA coordination so well that there was no reason for ICVA to include HMA coordination in their activities (personal communication, 2000). In Afghanistan, the situation is largely the same, no NGO coordinating bodies are involved with the MAC, despite the demining operation being under OCHA auspices and even, as for example in Herat, the same person might be in charge of the UN humanitarian coordination and the OCHA coordination between demining agencies. It was simply seen as two separate worlds, despite the fact that most Afghan demining NGOs also had a membership in one or several NGO coordinating bodies.

Thus, there are sufficient findings to suggest that both the nature of the activity and the type of NGOs and NGO staff involved, combined with the fact that the UN through the MAC is a non competing and quality assuring entity, have led to an NGO acceptance of a more forced coordination arrangement in HMA. It does,

however, seem to be the exception to confirm the rule of an NGO community generally opposing forced coordination arrangements, rather than accepting the principle of allowing a UN agency to direct the details of NGO activities.



## Appendix 2: International Involvement in Afghanistan

Throughout its history Afghanistan has been strongly influenced by its relationship, or rather lack of it, with the international community, as the country has attempted, from its landlocked position, to balance neutrality against economic interest. The starting point could be seen to be what many Afghans frequently define as the ‘golden era’ between 1950s and the early 1970s, where the country pursued a neutral and non-aligned policy, termed *bi-tarafi* (without sides) (Dupree 1980:511). This included a mix of bilateral collaboration and balanced superpower competition that ensured a degree of independence and gradual modernisation. Both the United States and the Soviet Union assisted (mainly through loans) with building airports, roads and hydroelectric plants, though in different parts of the country. Other countries also assisted, such as France, which sent constitutional experts, Germany that trained the police and established a smaller development programme in the Paktika province and Turkey that was involved in training of military officers (Dupree 1980: 630-632). However, by the early 1970’s the Afghan government had become heavily dependent on foreign assistance, and relied on superpower competition to maintain its credit line. With the US disengaging from Afghanistan in 1972 (Adamec 1991: 282) and no other large donor coming in to fill the gap, the Soviet Union suddenly assumed the dominant role and could to a much larger extent influence and dominate the relationship both in the economic and political sphere.

### The Cold War Period

The Soviet invasion in 1979 led to international condemnation and massive international support for the *mujahideen*, in which Pakistan alone had six (later seven) parties to relate to, which according to (Rais 1994: 196) ‘gave Pakistan leverage over Mujahideen politics’. The *mujahideen* was backed by massive amounts of international military and humanitarian assistance, albeit military hardware was delivered in secrecy for the first years as funds were used to purchase Soviet style weapons in Egypt and China, with the official explanation that all weapons were captured from Soviet troops (Rais 1994: 213). In Pakistan it was the Pakistani intelligence apparatus, the ISI, that channelled all support from Western and Islamic countries (primarily United States and Saudi Arabia) to the *Sunni* groups who had been helped to establish military bases and training fields along the Afghan border. The figures for military support provided over these years varies considerably, which is not surprising given the high degree of secrecy that enshrouded the operation, but one estimate is that in 1987 the value of United States support for the *mujahideen* was at US dollar 640 million, matched by an equal amount from Saudi Arabia (Hiro 1994: 251). No estimates have been made for the assistance provided for the *shii*a groups, supported by and operating from bases in Iran.

However, throughout this period, there was no clear distinction drawn between military and humanitarian assistance, the latter being rather a supplement to the first, or as (Baitenmann 1990) summarised: humanitarian aid was highly politicised during the 1980s. A contributing factor here was a massive international political support for the cause of Afghan *mujahideen* and a wish to provide support for what was deemed a legitimate and justified resistance war. The many solidarity movements established in Europe and the United States combined a political advocacy role in the countries of origin with fundraising and channelling of support to refugees in Pakistan and to people living in *mujahideen* controlled areas inside Afghanistan.<sup>104</sup> These practises implied that civilians who continued to live in areas controlled by the Kabul government would not receive any humanitarian assistance. The only agencies that defied this rule were the Geneva based International Assistance Mission, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and from the early 1990s onwards the Halo Trust. To illustrate how politicised the humanitarian environment was, it could further be mentioned that during the 1980s no NGOs provided assistance to refugees in Iran, despite the fact that this Islamic (and anti-western) state accommodated an equally large number of refugees as Pakistan. The thrust of the humanitarian assistance was thus provided in tandem with a military and political assistance strategy, favouring the Pakistan based *mujahideen* groups. The aim, obviously, was to use the humanitarian assistance not only to attract Afghans to side with the *mujahideen* but more especially to bolster the military resistance and encourage a continuation of their military struggle inside Afghanistan, aimed at achieving what the slogan of many of these agencies stated, namely ‘Soviet out of Afghanistan’.

The political aim of the majority of the NGO community was then reflected in their operational arrangements, whereby support was channelled through Afghan military commanders from the various political parties and NGO staff had to go through elaborate security checks before employment to ensure that they had no communist affiliations or sympathy.<sup>105</sup> The selection criteria applied by many solidarity NGOs, when they chose commanders to channel their funds, was their degree of military engagement against the Soviets and Afghan army, that they had a substantial number of *mujahideen*, and were not involved in intra-*mujahideen* fighting.<sup>106</sup>

The net result was that throughout this period of time, and based on a quite deliberate strategy, the assistance provided by the cross-border NGOs strengthened the military power and social influence of the Afghan commanders, most of whom already benefited from generous Western and Arabic military assistance. Although there certainly were exceptional cases in which commanders genuinely supported those in need in their neighbourhood (such as the community school or the local doctor), there is ample evidence that the majority of commanders used the assistance

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<sup>104</sup> There were established Afghanistan Committees in Denmark, West-Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and similar support groups in the United Kingdom (Afghan Aid), France (Guild de Raid and what later was renamed MADERA) and a number of organisations in the United States.

<sup>105</sup> One of the largest NGOs, the Swedish Afghanistan Committee, had a separate checking department that scrutinized both those who were to receive support and those applying for jobs in the organisation.

<sup>106</sup> These were the guidelines followed in the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) between 1988 and 1991.

to secure or further their own influence.<sup>107</sup> The poorest elements of Afghan society were not the commanders' primary target for assistance; rather, the NGO support was often provided to the influential landowners, mullahs and khans who could ensure their hold on power.

Part of the competitive mindset, at least among the most business-oriented commanders, was that they 'sold their services' to the aid agencies rather than to the Kabul government, which also spent generous amounts to attract or neutralise the various commanders.<sup>108</sup> The end result was a bargaining process that focussed upon how much aid could be offered to enable each commander to pursue his military aims, rather than focusing upon what the population in those areas might need, or questioning if basic human rights were upheld.

Following the Soviet withdrawal, completed in early 1989, an immediate collapse of the Kabul government was expected. However, with the decrease in international interest in the conflict and the collapse of the Soviet Union, military support rapidly dwindled from 1991 onwards. A major effort to rebuild and develop Afghanistan, a prospect repeatedly promised during the war, never materialised. Major donors, such as USAID and several semi-governmental American NGOs, closed down their activities. Saudi Arabia turned from supplying open military aid to providing what was termed humanitarian aid, with funding channelled through a donor NGO (ARCON) that upheld Saudi support for the commanders of their preference.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, one can conclude that for the length of the Cold War period the international humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan was highly political and aimed at strengthening one side of the conflict, *the mujahideen* in order to enable this diverse group to win a military victory over their opponents. Thus, international support was provided to those Afghans who were willing to risk their lives in the international effort to defeat communism and halt Soviet expansion. This policy was even reflected in educational material prepared by the NGOs, as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and The University of Nebraska, in which Afghan children learned to count by adding up numbers of bullets or counting bodies of dead enemies.<sup>110</sup> Advocating the right of Afghans to become refugees in neighbouring countries, to escape the violence and the human rights abuses, was not considered appropriate at that time. Moreover, questions about how humanitarian assistance was utilised and who received it were kept off the agenda. Embedded in such a strategy was the deliberate refusal to recognise various human rights abuses, and not least, the rather low regard for the rights of women of most of the *mujahideen* commanders. The

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<sup>107</sup> Asger Christensen discusses the development of the new breed of commanders and their dependency on aid in "Changes and continuities in leadership in rural Afghanistan", in Eide and Skaukjord, *op.cit.*, pp. 175-188.

<sup>108</sup> Commander Naqibullah from Kandahar used this argument when negotiating with the author. He even provided the exact amount he had been offered by the Kabul government.

<sup>109</sup> Personal communication with Afghans that worked with ARCON in the early 1990s and who, literally, had travelled inside Afghanistan with bags of money to be handed over to selected commanders.

<sup>110</sup> This teaching material for primary schools was in use as late as 1994; it was then provided to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jalalabad.

agencies' attitude was that such issues would, eventually, be addressed when the overarching political and military goals were achieved.

### **A Pawn in a Regional Conflict**

The 1990s were marked by Afghanistan becoming the hub of a regional rather than an international conflict, following political and military disengagement not only by the United States but also by major European and Islamic countries. That opened the way for a greater direct involvement of regional actors, while the establishment of the three new Central Asian republics on Afghanistan's northern border in 1991, added further complexity to the conflict. A range of regional conflicts (such as between Pakistan and India and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), religious differences (such as between Iran and Saudi Arabia), ethnic issues (such as *Pashtuns* divided between Pakistan and Afghanistan) and not forgetting economic opportunities for non-state actors, such as smuggling and drug production, provided ample reasons for interference and/or provision of military and financial support for Afghan groups. A frequently heard comment from Afghans during the 1990s was that some of their neighbours were more comfortable with an unsettled situation in Afghanistan than the emergence of a strong nation state, with a greater capability to uphold Afghan national interests. As will be documented later in this chapter, smuggling and drug production generated enormous income for those involved and helped commanders to sustain their armies and thereby control over geographical areas. However, neither the *mujahideen* government controlling Kabul, nor the *mujahideen* commanders controlling the countryside, saw any great need to provide any form of services for the population, or allow them to take part in decision making at the district or provincial level. The rule of gun, by the strongest force, was maintained as it had been throughout the 1980s, although now supported by the neighbouring countries. The role of the humanitarian agencies remained largely the same, although many of them started to look for more representative Afghan entities to collaborate with than the commanders, such as local *shuras*. So as long as there was no functioning government willing to spend income on the common Afghan, the NGOs continued to run schools and health services and to rehabilitate roads and agricultural activities, thus taking over much of the responsibility that an Afghan state should have assumed (Suhrke, Strand et al. 2002: 16).

### **Confronting or Accommodating the Taliban**

The advent of the *Taliban* brought about changes to some of this practise, both because some humanitarian agencies refused to cooperate with the regime on the grounds of their suppressive human rights policies, and, at the same time the international community reacted on the basis of a more *rights based* approach than had been the case during previous regimes. The overall pattern of a politicised international support did not, however, change, except that the arguments for directing international funding had changed and either supported the *Taliban* (as mainly Pakistan did) or supported the Northern Alliance (as other regional powers did), with only Turkmenistan and China continuing maintaining more of a neutral

stand (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2000: 5) , or, as a British businessman explained, doing business with both parties (personal communication, 2002).

The introduction of a UN Strategic Framework (OCHA 1998) and Principled Common Programming (OCHA 1998) in 1998, which also included donors and NGOs, set new parameters for interaction between the international humanitarian regime and the Taliban regime, limiting collaboration and rehabilitation and development programming. The one-sided UN sanctions on the *Taliban* introduced in late 1999 led to further isolation of the regime and increasing conflicts with the humanitarian agencies, as for example when the NGO coordinating body ACBAR was closed down in Kabul and *Taliban* imposed decree # 8 of 19 July 2000, further limiting the job opportunities of Afghan women in aid agencies (Fielden and Azerbaijani-Moghadam 2000).

The major difference between the situation as of year 2000 and the one that prevailed during the 1980s was that the *Taliban* effectively controlled most parts of Afghanistan, while the Kabul government at that time only controlled the larger cities. While the NGOs had a long tradition of opposing the Afghan government rather than collaborating with them, the international community now sought new ways for opposing or correcting the Taliban and sanctions and isolations were the remedies that had come into use over this last period. A detailed discussion on the 'stick and carrot' approaches is provided by (Van Brabant 1999), however, for Afghanistan the carrot was not offered even if the Taliban complied to the stick strategy, as in the issue of eradicating poppy cultivation.

## **Appendix 3: The Market Sector and the War Economy**

In a discussion on Afghan civil society the market is easily overlooked, since there has been more focus on the roles played by the government and the opposition forces, and the lack of influence the common Afghans have had over shaping policy. Afghan businessmen, however, have been both victims of the conflict and able to benefit grossly from the conflict, since the lines between the official and black economies have been difficult to draw, as has the distinction between businessmen, commander and politician.

### **An Emerging War Economy**

Afghans have a longstanding reputation of being clever and innovative businessmen, nurtured from the time the ancient Silk Road caravans started to cross through the country on the way between China and Europe. However, the many years of war and conflict have certainly had a major influence on the Afghan economy and brought changes to the business community. The massive influx of funding and military hardware to parties, commanders, tribal leaders and militia groups, combined with a fragmentation of national authority and close links with national and non-national institutions in neighbouring countries provided room for a wide range of private initiatives. The end result was that a large black economy developed in Afghanistan (Rubin 1999; Goodhand 2000), largely based on drug production, arms trade and the smuggling of consumer goods. Excessive printing of Afghan currency by several of the warring factions from 1992 onwards caused a severe inflation and led to immense economic problems for the average Afghan with different values of the Afghani notes dependent on those who distributed them..<sup>111</sup>

### **Transit Trade and Smuggling**

A central element in the war economy is the transit trade, both the one covered by the Afghan Transit Trade (ATT) agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the regular smuggling that takes place across Afghanistan's long border by tribes and traders who have had this as their income for centuries. The ATT agreement dates back to 1950, where Pakistan granted landlocked Afghanistan permission for duty-free import via Karachi port, an arrangement even upheld during the Soviet invasion (Rashid 2000: 190). At that time the Afghan State Bank provided a financial guarantee for the import purchases of Afghan businessmen, thus reducing their need

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<sup>111</sup> Afghani printed by General Dostum and distributed in the north held a lower exchange rate in Kabul than notes printed by the Rabbani government.

for upfront payment and larger expenses if the consignment was delayed on its long way from Karachi to the Afghan border.<sup>112</sup>

However, the controversial point is that most of the goods imported through the ATT do not remain in Afghanistan but are ‘smuggled’ back into Pakistan through the semi-autonomous Tribal Area after custom papers have been signed at the Afghan border point against a certain fee. Thus, a government or warlord(s) controlling the border crossing and surrounding areas ends up in a very favourable financial position, notwithstanding a portion of the income that falls to the tribes and Pakistani military, police, and politicians, for them to allow this lucrative business to continue. Pakistan Central Board of Revenue estimated that in 1997/98 Pakistan lost US dollar 600 millions in custom revenue (Rashid 2000: 191).

Added to this amount is the value of commodities brought in from Turkmenistan (largely electronics), Iran (used cars, petrol and consumer goods) or by air from Dubai (electronics and cloth) to airports in Kandahar, Kabul and Jalalabad, which were then brought into Pakistan. Until 1996 it was each commander or council of commanders controlling the various border areas, or roads, that cashed in on the revenue. Several established their own transport companies and airlines to increase their income, which were then used to transport items like gems, heroin and hashish out of and weapons and ammunition into Afghanistan.<sup>113</sup> In Kabul forces holding the military control did effectively control the black market, thereby increasing the revenue of single commanders and/or the party structure. A telling example is how rapidly central commanders within the Shura-e-Nezar established a firm control over petrol and diesel trade in Kabul from 1993 onwards. With a monopoly of this trade established through military means and influence (and military supplies from Iran) they controlled the access to the fuel and decided the price consumers had to pay.<sup>114</sup> The drug trade was certainly closely interwoven with this transport system but could in addition make use of the transport logistics established by the Pakistan ISI for the supply of military supplies inside Afghanistan during the 1980s. A system which according to Rashid (2000: 121) ‘could not have operated without the knowledge, if not connivance, of the army, the government and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Everyone chose to ignore it for the larger task was to defeat the Soviet Union.’ By the end of the 1990’s more of the drug transport went through Iran and, not least, the Central Asian republics, as according to head of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), Pino Arlacchi, ‘Afghan heroin supplies 80 per cent of Europe’s supply of heroin and 50 per cent of the world’s supply of heroin’ (2000: 123). While the *Taliban* banned poppy cultivation in areas of their control in 2000, the production was according to UNDCP increased in areas controlled by the Northern Alliance.

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<sup>112</sup> Information obtained from an Afghan trader who had managed to maintain good contact with both the Kabul Government (who provided him with bank guarantees) and the *mujahideen* parties who did not interfere in his transport business.

<sup>113</sup> Among these were Governor Hadji Qadir in Jalalabad, General Dostum in Mazar-e-Sharif and Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masood in Kabul, as well as traders /commanders in Kandahar.

<sup>114</sup> The author mapped the diesel/petrol market in Kabul in 1994 to be able to bargain for the best price (and quality) but did always, in the end, meet up with the same persons who all were related to Ahmed Shah Masood, then Defence Minister and leader of Shura-e-Nezar.

### Taliban Regulation of the Market

The difference that occurred when *Taliban* came to power was that they centralised the income from trade and smuggling, ensuring that tax collected at the border point went into the Afghan State Bank, while they established a taxation system in all areas they controlled. Here they combined the collection of the traditional taxation of property (*usher*) with the religiously based income tax (*zakat*). While much of this income was used for war activities, allocations were also made for the payment of government officials and institutions, as well as a limited number of rehabilitation projects. By the year 2000 both the *Taliban* and the Northern Alliance were also benefiting from financial and military support from their benefactors, though amounts are unknown, it certainly enabled them to keep their war machinery running and maintain their international representations.

More is known about border trade and smuggling, where the (World Bank, 2001) has undertaken a study that has set the estimated value to be about 2 billion US dollars in year 2000. Taxation of the drug production was estimated to provide an income of 35 million US dollar for the *Taliban* (Rubin 2000) although certainly, the main income was not received by the Afghan poppy growing farmers but rather regional and international smuggling networks. In 1994 a new potential income was introduced as oil companies started to look for options of exporting the vast oil and gas resources from the Central-Asian republics through a pipeline crossing Afghanistan. Oil companies such as UNOCAL and Bidas, competing on this presumed lucrative market, established contacts with both the *Taliban* and the Rabbani Government, later the Northern Alliance, to ensure access for and security of such an investment. Certainly the proposal generated interest in Afghanistan as it was estimated that the annual rent could be as high as 100 million US dollars (Rashid 2000:143-182). In comparison, it should be noted that the value of the humanitarian assistance was estimated at 124 million US dollars in 1998 (OCHA 1998), thus representing only a small percentage of national income compared to that of the war economy. But still, important for the running of a large number of projects (like schools and health) benefiting the Afghan population.

### A Privatised Financial Market

There are two other important financial factors to be mentioned here, affecting the business community and shaping their practice, namely the lack of a functional Afghan central bank and the existence of an unofficial money exchange and transportation system. While 'Da Afghanistan Bank' continued to operate during the entire 1990s, no humanitarian agencies trusted it enough to deposit their funds there, despite an insistence from successive authorities to do so. Instead, the agencies either transported their funds inside Afghanistan by courier (usually bringing US dollars or Pakistani rupees), which were then gradually exchanged into Afghani to secure the best possible rate, or the traditional Afghan money transfer system was used. In that case, money was paid to an Afghan trader in, for example, Peshawar, against a receipt and with a small percentage deducted for the transfer, and the money could then be withdrawn in larger cities inside Afghanistan. Despite the reduced value, the



latter system was often used by NGOs as it reduced the security risk for the staff that brought funds inside Afghanistan.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, when discussing the Afghan business community one needs to be aware of how privatised and militarised it has become over the years, and how dependent the various traders and smaller businessmen have been on protection and permits from the warlords, or, during the later years, the *Taliban*.

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<sup>115</sup> The author made use of this system for sending funding for humanitarian projects into Afghanistan in the early 1990s.

## Appendix 4: Afghan Migration Patterns

There are significant historical patterns in the Afghan migration history, influenced by a range of variables that have changed over time, though where conflict and poverty have been two central elements. Below is chronology of events from 1890s to today, a range of experiences that has contributed towards shaping the Afghans attitude towards migration.

### Migration Patterns Between 1890 and 1930

When Afghan migration is placed in a historical perspective the first major outflow of migrants from Afghanistan in recent history took place in the early 1890s, as the Afghan King Abdur Rahman forced the ethnic and religious minority, the *Hazaras*, under his rule. According to (Poladi 1989: 257) the migration was caused by destruction of houses and property, fear of being sold as slaves and of starvation. While some left for Turkistan (now known as Turkmenistan) and Tajikistan the majority fled to British India, for employment opportunities, or to Iran where they had a religious affiliation with the city of Mashad. Those who fled to British India settled mainly in the city of Quetta where many were enlisted in the Indian Army (Poladi 1989: 261), actually in such numbers that an 106<sup>th</sup> Hazara Pioneers division was established in 1904. A large number of *Hazaras* were brought to Kabul to serve as slaves for the inhabitants, after being termed non-Muslims by *Sunni* mullahs, a practice continuing until the mid 1930s (Poladi 1989: 360).

Though it was not only the *Hazaras* that were displaced during that time, also *Pashtun* groups opposing the King were forced to leave their home areas and take up residence in northern Afghanistan, which explains why one today finds clusters of *Pashtuns* living in many places north of the Hindu Kush range.

The expansion of the Soviet Union in the 1930, where Turkistan, as the name then was, was incorporated by force by the Bolsheviks, created at that time an influx and settlement of *Uzbek*, *Turkmen* and *Tadjik muhajirin* in northern Afghanistan (Shahrani 1995: 194), laying the foundation for a strong intra ethnic identity across the Afghan border.

### The 1960s and 1970s

During the 1960s and 70s work-migration to Iran increased. According to an informant in Herat, having been a work-migrant in Iran during this period, this was organised upon a request of the Iranian Shah and supported by the Afghan government. According to Rubin (1996) this workforce was estimated to include

about 600 000 Afghans. This work migration, however, was not confined to men from Western Afghanistan as the author has met several men from the Ghazni province that worked in Iran during this period.

A more politically motivated migration took place in the mid 1970s, as a number of students and teachers at the Kabul University, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and in opposition to the Afghan Government, fled to Pakistan after demonstrations organised by these students and following mass arrests. Within this small group were many of those that later were to become leaders of various Afghan resistance parties. Assisted by Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, they took up armed struggle against the Afghan Government from bases in Pakistan, (see Anwar (1988) for a critical review of this period), though with very limited success, as they did not enjoy much popular support within Afghanistan at that time.<sup>116</sup>

The Saur Revolution of 27 April 1978, in which President Daoud was killed and the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power, triggered the first major politically forced migration exodus, not least as people in the countryside started to revolt against the ill received reforms that were introduced (Anwar 1988: 141-150). Figures provided by Centlivre (1993: 13) illustrate these trends, as he set the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan during the period 1973-78 to about 1500, with an increase to 109 000 in April 1978 and then to 190 000 in October 1979.

## The 1980s

The major exodus, however, came only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that took place on December 27, 1979. The common Afghan regarded the invading Soviet soldiers as infidels and their presence in Afghanistan a justification for a *hijrah* to the neighbouring Muslim countries of Pakistan and Iran. Within the next years the world witnessed the world's largest refugee movement of an estimated 3,2 million Afghans fleeing to Pakistan and 2,3 million to Iran (Christensen 1995: 105). (Shahrani 1995: 193) informs that over 97 % of the refugees fleeing to Pakistan were from rural agricultural and pastoral nomadic background, while (Sliwinsky 1989: 46), found that 85% of these were *Pashtuns*. In both countries Afghans were welcome, and supported, as Western and Islamic countries equally condemned the invasion. The difference, however, was that while aid agencies and support poured into Pakistan the Iranian government, widely unpopular after the Islamic Revolution, was not assisted in its efforts to assist the migrants. This, eventually, led to different types and levels of assistance within these two countries. In Iran the refugees were assimilated into the Iranian society, benefiting from health and education services available to the common Iranian, with only a very limited support provided by the UNHCR. While in Pakistan they were housed in refugee camps, or took up lodging in the cities if they could afford it, and were supported by the NGOs and the United Nations, coordinated through the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CAR). What was common to both countries, though, was that many Afghan men periodically engaged in military operations inside Afghanistan, a practice that allowed the

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<sup>116</sup> During the period 1988-91 the author interviewed several members of the Jamiate Islami, as well as members of Maoist groups opposing them at the University, about the establishment of the mujahideen parties.

refugees to keep themselves well informed about the situation in their home villages and areas.

During this period there were two further groups of Afghans leaving Pakistan and Iran for Europe, USA, Canada or Australia. One was a large group of highly educated Afghans that either didn't want to be aligned with the political groups or were attracted by more interesting jobs outside of the region. The second group were those who sought political asylum, because they opposed the political and military ideology of the Pakistani backed Afghan political parties, or, even, the role Pakistan played in Afghanistan. Among those leaving were prominent Afghans like the longstanding Afghan ambassador Abdur Rahman Pazhwak (Adamec 1991: 191), who left for the United States and the religious leader Mia Gul Jan of Tagab, who declared  *Jihad*  against the PDPA regime (Olesen 1995:280), and, according to his grandson (personal communication, 2001), was 'encouraged' to take up residence in Saudi Arabia when he declined to collaborate with the Pakistani military.

Within Afghanistan another major movement of people took place during the same period, though less studied and documented than what occurred in Pakistan, with people shifting from rural areas towards the larger cities. Though figures from this period are not independently verified, however (Rubin 1996: 1) suggest that the number of people residing in Kabul grew from about 600 000 to over 2 million throughout the 1980s. The reasons given for such a dramatic increase in the population was the security that prevailed there, especially for those who supported the PDPA government, and the job and business opportunities such affiliations offered. Women particularly, would benefit from a freer and more westernised lifestyle, including opportunities for jobs and access to higher education.

Although the world community expected a rapid fall of the Kabul Government following the completion of the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, and a massive repatriation, there were in fact only a limited number of refugees that returned during the following years. This can be attributed to several factors, of which the continued warfare and the uncertainty about the formation of a new Afghan mujahideen government were those most frequently mentioned. However more important, it appears that the  *muhajirin*  did not see the religious justification for ending their  *hijra*  fulfilled at that time, as they still regarded the Kabul government as was an  *infidel*  one. This argument of a religiously influenced migration pattern, seems supported by the spontaneous repatriation of 1,56 million refugees one witnessed immediately after the mujahideen parties took control of Kabul in 1992, where humanitarian agencies were largely unprepared to assist the large number of volunteer returnees. A similar situation occurred in Iran, though, as the fieldwork documented, many families left one or more male family members behind in Iran to secure an income for the repatriated family.

## The 1990s

This massive repatriation from Pakistan and Iran did not, however, put an end to Afghan migration. As the rural population planned for their return to Afghanistan the urban elite, many affiliated with the PDPA or who had been governmental employees, prepared themselves to leave Afghanistan as it became evident that the

Kabul government would lose financial and military support following the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the years 1991–93 as many as 80 000 Kabulis were registered upon entering Pakistan, and a large number reportedly also left for India, the former Soviet republics or to the West.<sup>117</sup> The mujahideen parties struggle for influence, and supremacy, in the newly formed Afghan Government, was a power-struggle that eventually led to open hostility and fighting for the control of the capital Kabul. A major battle, commencing on January 1, 1994, led to an outflow of people from the city. The Pakistani Government closed their border towards Afghanistan, and thus the migrants were confined inside Afghanistan. The largest group settled in the Jalalabad region, where as many as 300 000 migrants resided for almost a year in tent camps erected by various NGOs and UN agencies. A number of migrants tried to reach to Iran, but facing problems with crossing the Iranian border they opted for a temporary settlement in Herat city while many sought temporary shelter in areas close to Kabul (NCA 1994).

While these internal movements took place in Afghanistan, a new group of migrants actually entered into Northern Afghanistan from 1991, this time from Tajikistan as fighting broke out there between the government and an association of opposition groups. These refugees, reaching a total of 60 000 in 1993 (Rubin 1996) settled in camps along the border. However, some moved on to Kabul until caught up by the unrest there, when they then moved on towards Iran. Several *Tajik* families were still residing in Herat in 1999, explaining that they were not returning to Tajikistan as they feared for their lives (personal communication, 1999). The majority, however, returned to Tajikistan through a UN assistance programme completed by June 1997.

During the period January 1994 to mid 95 the United Nations estimated that half of the Kabul population of 1, 5 million were either internally displaced within the city, or moving back and forth to areas least affected by the war.<sup>118</sup> It was during this period that an incident of ethnic cleansing took place, when the Shura-e-Nezar organisation, under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Masood, and the Ittehad Islami party, headed by Abdul Sayaff, in the predominantly *Hazara* inhabited Afshar district (for a detailed account see report from Amnesty International (1995)). Whatever reason for the slaughter, the actions led to a major out flux of *Hazaras* from Kabul, many seeking temporary shelter with relatives in Hazarajat or in Quetta in Pakistan.<sup>119</sup>

These events coincided with the expulsion of Afghans from Iran, from 1994 onwards, as the Iranian Government announced that Afghans should return as the war had come to an end. A tri-party repatriation programme was established, between the UNHCR and the Afghan and Iranian Government, in which the returnees were provided with a limited support package, transport across the border and mine-awareness training.<sup>120</sup> This program was terminated when Taliban captured

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<sup>117</sup> The author has met relatives of several Afghans high-ranking PDPA members that left for India or the Soviet Union during 1989 and 1991.

<sup>118</sup> Estimates provided by the UNCHS (Habitat) office in Kabul in September 1995

<sup>119</sup> The author conducted a series of interviews in Jaghori, Hazarajat, in October 1996 with migrants that had fled Kabul during this period, including an old man and a male doctor that had survived a regular execution organised by Tadjiks belonging to the Shura-e-Nezar.

<sup>120</sup> The author interviewed representatives from Iranian Foreign and Interior Ministry as well as the Afghan Ambassador and UNHCR officials in Teheran and Mashad in 1994.

western Afghanistan in September 1995, and was according to UNHCR officials in Herat (personal communication, 2001) only reinitiated in the spring of 1999.

The Taliban take-over of Kabul in September 1996 forced those affiliated to the Rabbani government to leave for northern Afghanistan and the Pansjir valley. This move, however, had been planned well in advance and the retreating forces brought with them most of the valuables they had accumulated during their period of rule. UN officials, observing the exodus, claimed that it took several hours for a convoy of heavily loaded cars and buses to make their way out of the capital (personal communication, 1996). The situation in Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan was reportedly less orderly when Taliban captured these areas, though no figures are available of people fleeing the city. The battlefronts, like those in Bamiyan city, have since been areas where repeated rounds of fighting has forced the population to leave, or the Shomali plain where the Taliban in August 1999 purposely drove 200 000 inhabitants out of the area (Rashid 2000: 234) to eradicate any hiding places for their opposition.

### **The Situation as of 2001**

Many of the Afghan refugees still residing in Pakistan have been there for more than 20 years. Many of these have established new livelihoods in exile and new generations of Afghans have grown up there largely influenced by the habits and culture of these countries. There are also increasing estimates of internally displaced within Afghanistan, tallying 12, million by end of 2001 (UNHCR 2002) with a majority of these displaced since spring 2000, primarily due to drought and secondly localised and seasonal military activities (Strand, Harpviken et al. 2001: 8). Meanwhile, organisations like the ICRC stopped providing assistance to IDP in Herat in 2001 as their displacement was not deemed to be war related (personal communication, Herat, 2001). The forced repatriation, of both refugees and work migrants, is reportedly continuing from Iran with Pakistan planning to follow suit, albeit a steady, but small, voluntary repatriation is ongoing with a total of 26 092 Afghans returning home in 2001 (UNHCR 2002). The difficult living conditions Afghans observe in these countries, and the general negative prospect of peace that prevailed until end of 2001 led many Afghans to seek refugee in countries outside of the region. A trend observed during the fieldwork period through May – June 1999, both in Pakistan and inside Afghanistan, is the use of a well-organised illegal travel-system from these countries towards the Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Several informants told that the price for the travel depended on the expected income in the country they are heading towards, the quality of the travel documents (and advice) they were provided with, the expenses of the travel and how popular the destination country is among the Afghans (personal communication, Herat, 1991). The travel routes changed frequently, depending on where controls were expected and on changes in legislation in the various countries. The system appeared to be very flexible, well organised and, not least, a very profitable business for those organising it, who even provide a certain warranty on their ‘product’ if the migrants fail to enter the country they were travelling to.

## Appendix 5: NGOs History in Afghanistan

During the 1970s only a few Western NGOs operated in Afghanistan, the International Assistance Mission (IAM) having the largest presence, which as the name indicate, draw their staff from missionary organisations worldwide. The organisation did then work closely with governmental institution, building up eye hospitals in different parts of the country (personal communication, 1999).

### Responding to the Soviet Invasion

In 1979, shortly after the first influx of refugees, humanitarian assistance for Afghans started to be distributed in Pakistan. That assistance was delivered through International NGOs and ICRC, as well as joint Pakistani/International networks, such as the Inter-Aid Committee that later was renamed Inter-Church Aid (ICA).<sup>121</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, a Commiserate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) was set up by the Pakistani Government to provide a dedicated administration for refugees and coordination of the assistance provided for them. CAR registered the refugees, kept overview of assistance provision and issued tax exemption on relief goods for NGOs registered with the Pakistani Government. According to Nicholds and Borton (1994: 38) there were 17 NGOs registered by early 1983, though the number had increased to over 50 in 1987, mainly providing health care, water and sanitation facilities but also involved in supplementary feeding, education and income generation programmes. These authors further note that many US agencies receiving funding during the early 1980s were not operational in Pakistan at this time, as the US discouraged their establishment in fear of accusations by the Soviet Union that these were harbouring CIA agents, and thus funding was channelled through Christian NGOs as ICA (Nicholds and Borton 1994: 39).

During the mid 1980s, a number of solidarity and medical organisations moved on from refugee oriented assistance and began to operate cross-border programs from Pakistan through commanders and political parties, with the aim of supporting Afghans who had remained in Afghanistan. Few measures were taken to control the use and impact of that support, and many of the operations were conducted in secrecy due to a fear of spies that could inform the Kabul Government, and then target aid convoys or areas where medical teams worked, and the fact that the Pakistani border was crossed illegally.<sup>122</sup> Most of this support was allocated for groups based close to the Pakistani border and in the areas close to Kabul, as these

<sup>121</sup> This was an ecumenical network established in 1971 to aid victims of the Pakistani/ Bangladesh war.

<sup>122</sup> The Author's first border crossing was undertaken dressed as an Afghan, with dyed hair and beard, through a long detour bypassing the official border posts. Although rejected the first day by Pakistani border guards, the border was crossed the second day through a different route.

commanders frequently visited Peshawar or Quetta. Although some support, mostly cash, was shifted to commanders in the Herat region and the Pansjir valley (for a description of such a NGO operation see Lindgren (1989) as these had built up a military reputation. Many of those solidarity NGOs that operated with medical teams concentrated their activities geographically, as they were dependent on the mujahideen commanders to provide them with transport and security arrangements. Nicholds and Borton (1994: 51) is of the view that Western NGOs were largely influenced by practical rather than political considerations when selecting their mujahideen partners, while Islamic NGOs primarily worked in areas controlled by two of the more fundamentalist Afghan parties, the Hezb-e Islami (Hekmatiar) and Ittehdad Islami.<sup>123</sup> Whatever collaborating partner, they worked in isolations from other NGOs and other Afghan groups.

Only the Afghan Red Crescent Society, closely linked to the Afghan Government, and a few international NGOs, continued their work from Kabul operating within government controlled areas inside Afghanistan and under their coordination. The ICRC was, together with WHO, asked to leave Kabul although ICRC did return in 1987 (Nicholds and Borton 1994: 43). A well established organisation as IAM was split at this time, as western donors were reluctant to fund an operation that aided 'communists' while the IAM board maintained their humanitarian orientation and refused to withdraw from Kabul. The result was that a new organisation, SERVE, was formed by US missionary groups and established their office in Pakistan where they then received US AID funding (private information, 2001), and could continue a much more independent operation.

In 1985, the Islamic Coordination Council (ICC) was formed to support International Islamic NGOs wishing to ensure that aid was provided in accordance with Islamic values. Coordination between Western NGOs was exercised within limited sectors, such as for those agencies involved in health and agriculture projects inside Afghanistan. Then in 1986 came the establishment of the Voluntary Agency Group, described by (Nicholds and Borton 1994: 86) as 'an informal grouping' consisting of international NGOs engaged in refugee assistance programmes. The Cooperative Committee was another more informal coordination body, consisting of agencies engaged in cross border operations. And also the same year came the establishment of the Committee of Medical Coordination by western NGOs engaged in cross border health projects.<sup>124</sup> Nicholds and Borton does furthermore mention a Joint Council, to be established in March 1988, but this must have been a more exclusive and informal grouping as a cross-border NGO as the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, which had quite a substantial operation at that time, was never included in their activities described as 'information sharing and policy dialogue' (Nicholds and Borton 1994: 87).

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<sup>123</sup> The reason why the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee ended up working with Commander Qari Baba in Ghazni both contradict and support this theory. Initially the medical teams should work in the area of a commander selected out of political preferences, but as the medical team did not gain confidence in his travel arrangement and they incidentally came in contact with a representative of Qari Baba in Quetta they opted to collaborate with his organisation.

<sup>124</sup> This coordination body was well functioning in 1988, with a Director on full time employment, when the author took up a job with a Norwegian NGO in Peshawar, with very technical meetings mostly attended by doctors and nurses.



## The Post Soviet Period

After the Soviet Union withdrew, both the UN and a number of international NGOs hastily established themselves inside Afghanistan, while others, as the Salvation Army, withdrew as they judged their refugee oriented mandate as coming to an end. In 1988, a separate UN organisation, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes in Afghanistan (UNOCA), placed directly under the UN Secretary General and led by Prince Saidruddin Agha Khan, was set up to coordinate assistance and rehabilitation programs. In August 1988, as a response to this initiative and to safeguard NGO interests, which some agencies felt under threat as the UN seemed to overlook NGO experience and expertise, as well as to facilitate co-ordination and communication with the UN system, a large number of NGOs formed the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR). Subsequently the other specialised coordination arrangements were included into the new body as sub committees alongside committees established for provinces or larger geographical areas, as Hazarasjat.<sup>125</sup> As it proved difficult for agencies working in Quetta to participate in meetings held in Peshawar, these agencies decided to establish a separate organisation, which was named the South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC) (Bennett 1995).

## Afghan NGOs

A small number of Afghan NGOs, many of them founded by Afghan doctors, had been active in Pakistan during the 1980s (Nicholds and Borton 1994: 34). Some of these NGOs had extended their assistance inside Afghanistan and had managed to draw support and funding from the Afghan diaspora.<sup>126</sup> More Afghan NGOs were established by Afghan professionals following the 1988 Soviet withdrawal and, on the expectation that Afghan refugees would return to Afghanistan, from 1989 onwards, some International NGOs converted their organisations, or part of them, into Afghan NGOs.<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, they were few in numbers and in 1989 it was estimated that there were less than 30 functioning Afghans NGOs.<sup>128</sup> Following a decision by the UN to promote establishment of Afghan NGOs, with the aim of building an Afghan implementing capacity as an alternative to International NGOs, the number of Afghan NGOs boomed, even despite the fact that very few Afghan NGOs held any community base or support and were mostly unaware of what exactly was expected of them. The result was that many businesses, political party departments and commanders, as well as relatives of UN employees established their

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<sup>125</sup> According to Nicholds and Burton (1994: 87-88) a contributing factor to the establishment of ACBAR was that UNOCA apparently had requested the Geneva based ICVA to take on the role of coordinating NGOs in Peshawar and Quetta. This was met with strong resentment among the NGOs, of which only one held an ICVA membership.

<sup>126</sup> One of these was the United Medical Centre of Afghan Mujahideen Doctors, who also received support from Scandinavian NGOs.

<sup>127</sup> The most frequently cited such transformation was the Salvation Army that systematically built up an Afghan organisation from their refugee assistance programme, that was termed Afghan Development Association (ADA).

<sup>128</sup> The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) did then for the first time support Afghan NGOs, in an attempt to establish alternative funding channels to the commanders.

operations under an NGO name, attracted by funding made readily available, which according to Nicholds and Borton (1994: 63) amounted to US \$ 30 000. At the same time, much debate took place at ACBAR concerning the 'Afghanisation' of NGOs, the aim being to allow Afghans a greater say in the running of NGOs, as well as more influence on decision making and priority setting generally. This led, in November 1991, to the formation of a new coordinating body, named the Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB) (Bennett 1995).

### Aid During the 1990s

Following the end of the Cold War, and the decline in military aid as consequence of the negative symmetry agreement between the USA and the Soviet Union (for details on the Geneva agreement see Rais (1994), humanitarian aid became more important to local commanders for maintaining advantage in the face of fierce rivalry in an ongoing struggle for power. Most of the assistance continued to be targeting the border provinces with Pakistan, although, after 1992, more support went to Western and Northern Afghanistan, while the central Hazarasjat region continued to receive little support. The main reason for this can be attributed partly to the ease of access of areas close to Peshawar and Quetta, and partly because a large number of refugees came from these areas. As a result a large number of the Afghan NGO employees were predominantly male *Pashtuns* holding a certain command of English (for a discussion on this development see Goodhand and Chamberlain (1996)). But as agencies reduced their security concerns even the cross-border agencies became more incline to collaborate and engage in more formal coordination arrangements, and to gradually open up to share their program activities through sub committees of ACBAR

From 1992 onwards, many NGOs moved to Kabul although most of these withdrew to Pakistan when fighting erupted between the various mujahedin groups. ICRC, however, maintained a high level of activity from their headquarters in Kabul, as did a few French and Afghan NGOs and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (UNCHS/Habitat). Following the installation of the Rabbani Government in Kabul, in 1993, the issue of NGO regulation was raised in the discussion about an NGO Protocol Agreement (ACBAR 1994), which several NGOs later signed.<sup>129</sup> But as the Government was divided into military/political groups such agreements had little practical use, and the fear of strict NGO regulations were largely unfound. NGOs, who had maintained their contacts from the Mujahedin period, got their approvals and obtained permits and services from Ministries run by those groups and personalities that had previously benefited from their support, and it became more of a business relationship than a normal government/NGO relationship with the government in a coordination function (Strand 2002). It was, anyhow, during this period that the Kabul Emergency Program (KEP) was established by a number of Afghan and International NGOs, under guidance of UNCHS/Habitat. These agencies proved it possible to provide a well-functioning coordination system with a minimum of bureaucratic procedures. However, in 1995, both ACBAR and UNOCA set up additional, and partly competing, coordination structures in Kabul, although they

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<sup>129</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council/ Norwegian Church Aid was one of the first NGOs to sign such an agreement in 1993.

came under heavy pressure from NGOs and donors to forge links with the already existing coordination structures, which neither organisation respected.<sup>130</sup>

### Aid Provision During the Taliban Period

As the Taliban gained control over Kabul in 1996, some more specific issues increased the tensions between NGOs and the Taliban administration that went beyond the gender and *maharram* impasse as the Taliban grew more confident of their military control. First, in order to continue operating in Afghanistan, NGOs were in early 1998 asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Taliban and, in Kabul, to transfer their offices to the Polytechnic complex. Both of these instructions were contested by many, though not all, NGOs, as there was a concern that the Taliban wished to impose much stricter control on their activities and who they could employ. The ACBAR Director was particularly vocal, although several larger NGOs and not least the Afghan ones disagreed with the presentation that applied for the protest. The Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB) adapted a much less confronting strategy, which then, in turn, was criticised by other international NGOs. Shortly after, in September 1998, came an American rocket attack on alleged terrorist camps in Afghanistan, one of the consequences of which was that a UN military observer in Kabul was shot dead. This led to concerns about levels of safety, which, in turn, resulted in the withdrawal of UN and NGO staff and a ban on UK and US nationals from travelling to or working in Afghanistan. An exception to this ban was extended to nationals working for ICRC, it being agreed that the situation in Afghanistan fell within ICRC's assumed security risk. ECHO and the EU also halted and reduced assistance to Afghanistan, in particular with respect to Kabul. The cutbacks came shortly after the arrest of Commissioner Emma Bonino, which came as a result of her entry, accompanied by a large number of journalists and cameramen, into a female ward of a Kabul hospital.<sup>131</sup>

Following the controversy between ACBAR and the Ministry of Planning, in Kabul, the latter announced at a meeting with NGOs in April 1999 that ACBAR would not be allowed to run a coordination mechanism in Kabul, on the grounds that coordination was a task to be handled by the Ministry. According to the Ministry no coordinating body had taken any initiative to obtain a MoU with the Central Taliban authorities, and in a letter for a workshop for the coordinating bodies, held in September 1999, they expressed a lack of knowledge about their activities (Strand, Lander et al. 1999: 33). In Herat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did neither approve ACBAR's establishment, on the basis that, as the local Minister explained the author (personal communication, 1999), a locally based coordinating body, the NGOs' Coordination Body (NCB), already exists and that two NGO coordinating bodies in the city would be superfluous.

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<sup>130</sup> These observations are based on the authors work experience in Kabul during this period.

<sup>131</sup> Several directors and staff of international agencies in Kabul, May 1999, interviewed for this study indicated that they were of the firm belief that this incident, and thus the conflict, had been planned in advance.

## UN and NGO Relations

In parallel with the events mentioned above came the Principled Common Programming (PCP) into being. This process began at the Askhabad Conference, held in Turkmenistan in January 1997 (OCHA 1997), where then, on April 24, 1998, a document outlining the PCP process was presented (OCHA 1998). It is mentioned here, however, because it is worth bearing in mind that the PCP aimed to achieve three rather dramatic and groundbreaking changes to the Afghan relief scene:

- i) A formalised cooperation between UN agencies, NGOs and Donors.
- ii) A linkage between the NGO community and a UN reform set to test a new model for UN operations in complex political emergencies, which was set to encompass and coordinate both humanitarian and political concerns and principles.
- iii) The inclusion of donors both within the overall process and also with decisions to be taken in the field.

Although, as explained in details earlier, the sanctions that was imposed by the UN Security Council further polarised the conflict between the NGOs and the Taliban administration whereas the drought posed a set of new challenges on the humanitarian community from 1999 onwards.

## **Appendix 6: Interview and Survey Forms**

1. Questions for Village Shura, Izhaq Suleiman Village, Enjil, Herat Province, Afghanistan
2. Interview Form, Izhaq Suleiman Village, Enjil, Herat Province, Afghanistan
3. Interview Form, Staff of Field Based NGOs, Herat, Afghanistan
4. Interview Form, NGO Directors, Herat, Afghanistan
5. Interview Form, NGO Directors, Pakistan and Afghanistan
6. Survey Form, Afghan Surveyers, Enjil, Herat Province, Afghanistan
7. Survey Form, Members of NGO Coordinating bodies, Afghanistan

Form 1

**VILLAGE MAPPING IZHAQ SULEIMAN VILLAGE**

Questions for meeting with village *shura*

- 1) Number of inhabitants, ethnic representation, land-owning structures, common property as water-sources/ irrigation channels and mosque, main economic activities and markets they relate to, relationship with neighbouring villages.
- 2) Why and when did they seek refugee outside of the village, how many of the inhabitants became refugees or IDPs, where did they go, for how long period, how many have returned and how many remains as refugees.
- 3) What is the role of the *shura*, what issue will they deal with and which will they leave for others (responding to events/ contacts made to them or are they active on initiating things)
- 4) What contacts has the *shura* had with NGOs and UN agencies, during refugee, during return and after resettlement, and which NGO/ agencies.
- 5) What kind of support/assistance is received, from whom and when.
- 6) What projects are presently implemented in the village (if any), by whom, and through which structure.
- 7) Is it their impression that NGOs or UN agencies cooperate in this area, or are they competing with each other.
- 8) Do any *shura* member personally know anyone working with an NGO or UN agencies

## Form 2

**INTERVIEW FORM****Izhaq Suleiman, Enjil, Herat province, Afghanistan**

Date:

Interviewer:

Duration:

Translator:

**RESPONDENT PERSONALIA**

- 1 Name:
- 2 Mahalla:
- 3 Occupation:
  - 3.1 Skilled or unskilled?
- 4 Literate/illiterate:
- 5 Age:
- 6 Qaum:
- 7 Married:
- 8 How many people are living in your household?
  - 8.1 Children:
    - 8.1.1 Age of children?
    - 8.1.2 Does your children attend school?
  - 8.2 Who are the others living in your household?
    - 8.2.1 Which members of the household contribute with an income?
- 9.1 Does your family own land?
  - 9.1.1 If yes, how much?
  - 9.1.2 If yes, does your family rent out land to others?
  - 9.1.3 If no, does your family rent land?
- 9.2 Does your family have a business?
- 9.3 Do you employ people ?
- 9.4 Do you have any property (land, house, business) outside I. S.?
- 9.5 Do you own your own house?
- 9.6 Does the household have animals?
- 140 If you have to make an important decision regarding the future of the family, who would you consult with? (specify)

**LOCAL STRUCTURE, MAHALLA**

- 10 How many households are there in this mahalla?
  - 10.1 How many of them have been refugees?
- 11 Are there many refugees that have not returned?

- 11.1 What kind of contact do you have with them?
- 11.2 Do you know if the remaining refugees are planning to return?
- 11.3 If not, why?
- 12 From those that returned to the mahalla, have many left again?
- 13 What are the main types of income in this mahalla?
- 14 From this mahalla, are there many going for jobs outside the village?

#### LOCAL STRUCTURE

- 20 Who is the representatives of the mahalla in the village *shura*?
- 21 What do you see as the responsibilities of the *shura*?
- 22 When was the *shura* established?
- 23 What was the situation before the establishment of the *shura*?
- 24 Who would you talk to if you have an issue that you want to bring up with the *shura*?
  - 24.1 *Maulawi (Rais-e Shura)*
  - 24.2 *Arbab*
  - 24.3 *Mahalla representative*
  - 24.4 *Other:*
- 26 To which extent can women influence decisions by the *shura*, f.ex. regarding the placement of waterpumps?
- 28 For what purpose would you visit the neighbouring villages? (names of villages?)
  - 28.1 *Engagement or wedding*
  - 28.2 *Visiting family*
  - 28.3 *Work*
  - 28.4 *Business*
  - 28.5 *Administrative issues*
  - 28.6 *Shopping*
  - 28.7 *Other:*
- 29 For what purpose would you visit Herat city?
  - 29.1 *Engagement or wedding*
  - 29.2 *Visiting family*
  - 29.3 *Work*
  - 29.4 *Business*
  - 29.5 *Administrative issues*
  - 29.6 *Shopping*
  - 29.7 *Other:*

#### MIGRATION 1: DEPARTURE

- 30 Have you and your family been refugees?
- 31 What were the major reasons that you left?
- 32 When did you leave?
- 33 What was the destination?
  - 33.1 Had any of your family members been at that destination before you went there as a refugee?
- 37 Who did you leave together with?
  - 37.1 *Family members:*
  - 37.2 *Others:.....*



38 How did you raise the money for the trip?

## **MIGRATION 2: ABROAD**

50 Did you stay in one location, or did you move between several locations when you were outside I. S.?

50.1 Name(s) of location(s)?

52 Housing:

52.1 Did you live in a camp?

Yes....

.No....

52.2 Who did you live together with?

53 What sort of documents did you receive?

59 Did you receive any assistance as refugees? If yes, from whom?

59.1 *NGOs*.....

59.2 *UN agencies*.....

59.3 *Others*.....

60 What educational services were offered to your children?

61 What health services did you have access to?

62 What assistance did you receive in the form of money or food items?

63 How did you earn your income when you were in exile?

Wage employment....

Self-employment.....

Other.....

63.1 Who did you work for? (Foreigner/Iranian; Afghan; Villager/Aqu.; Relative)

64 Did you register as a refugee?

64.1 If yes, where did you register?

64.2 When did you register as a refugee

65 If you had a security problem, who would you be able to contact for assistance?

## **MIGRATION 3: RETURN & RESETTLEMENT**

70 When did you return?

71 What was the main reason that made you come back to I. S.?

72 How did your household take the decision to return back to I. S.?

73 Did the whole family return together?

74 Who did you travel with when you returned?

75 Did you receive any help for returning? If yes, from whom?

75.1 *neighbours* .....

75.2 *NGOs*.....

75.3 *UN agencies*.....

75.4 *Governments*.....

75.5 *other*.....

76 What did you bring with you when you came back to I.S.? (money; valuables; household items)

77 How did you spend the resources that you brought back with you?

79 What did you do with your refugee card when you returned?

- 80 Have you been back to the refugee location after your return?.....  
 80.1 How many times?  
 80.2 For what purpose?
- 81 Did you receive any assistance in the village after your return? If yes, from whom?  
 81.1 *NGOs*.....  
 81.2 *UN agencies*.....  
 81.3 *Government*.....  
 81.4 *Others*.....
- 141 If you are concerned about the security situation in the area, who would you ask for information?

### **SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS**

- 90 Are any of your relatives staying abroad today? Yes.....No.....  
 90.1 If yes, who?  
 90.2 If yes, what contact do you have with them?  
 90.2.1 How often do you have contact with them?  
 90.3 If yes, do they contribute to the economy of your household?
- 91 What were the biggest challenges you met when resettling in the village?
- 92 Had anyone cared for your property while you were away? Yes.....No.....  
 92.1 If yes, who did so?.....  
 92.2 If yes, did you receive any rent for your property while you were a refugee?  
 92.3 If yes, where are they staying now?.....
- 93 What kind of jobs have you had since your return?
- 142 What do you do if a member of the family gets seriously ill and you need money for treatment?

### **ASSISTANCE:**

- 100 How would you describe the economic situation of I. S.?
- 101 What do you see as the most important resource for strengthening the economy of your village?
- 102 What do you see as the most important needs of the village
- 103 Why do you think these are the most important needs to be dealt with?
- 104 What would be most important for you personally?
- 105 Do you know about any aid organisations that works or has worked in the village?(MA-I)
- 106 Have you in any manner benefited from the support of relief agencies?
- 107 Do you know the difference between an NGO and an UN agency?
- 108 Where do you think the relief agencies get their money from?
- 109 Who are these agencies consulting in the village?
- 110 From your experience, are the agencies working together or separately?
- 136 Do you know about any projects to deal with the problem of landmines and UXOs?
- 112 Have you heard about the work of relief organisations on the radio?
- 114 Do you know how to get in contact with humanitarian agencies?
- 115 Do you know if humanitarian agencies are working in different parts of Afghanistan?

- 116 In what manner do you think that humanitarian agencies coordinate among themselves?
- 113 When you think about the future, what hopes do you have for your children?

## Form 3

**INTERVIEW FORM****STAFF OF FIELD BASED NGOs, HERAT, AFGHANISTAN**

Interview date: ..... Carried out by:.....  
 Time:..... Translator:.....  
 Name of interviewee:..... Organisation:.....  
 Position of interviewee:..... Age:.....  
 Employment time with organisation:..... Education:.....  
 Professional training:.....

Can you give a brief presentation of the NGO:

NGOs history in Herat:

Activities implemented by the NGO in Herat:

Basic information about the project in this village:

Basic information about village and villagers:

- 1) What is your understanding of the structure of the village; and of the *shura* the NGO has chosen to work with?
- 2) What is the method the NGO you work with use to extract information from the village/ villagers, i.e. to establish needs and resources?
- 3) Has the NGO you work with secured an involvement of the villagers at all levels of the project cycle?
- 4) Do the NGO you work with co-operate and coordinate with other NGOs on the local level?
- 5) Do the NGO you work with participate in co-operation and coordination at the province level?
- 6) What is your influence on selecting projects and how these are to be implemented?
- 7) Will you be able to change projects if this is required by the villagers?
- 8) What is your definition of an NGO?
- 9) What is your understanding of coordination?
- 10) What is your understanding of community participation?
- 11) Based on your experience can you see reasons against a closer co-operation with other NGOs?
- 12) Based on your experience can you see reasons for avoiding co-operation with the UN agencies?
- 13) How is your NGO's relationship with the local authorities?
- 14) What is your relationship with the local authorities?
- 15) Do you have comments to the questions or further information you believe might be usable for this study?

## Form 4

**INTERVIEW FORM : NGO DIRECTORS, HERAT, AFGHANISTAN**

Interview date: ..... Carried out by:.....  
 Time:..... Translator:.....  
 Setting:.....

**PERSONALIA**

1. Name of respondent:.....
2. Organisation:.....
3. Position of interviewee:.....
4. Employment with organisation:.....

**INFORMATION ABOUT NGO AND THEIR ACTIVITIES**

5. What are the main objectives of the NGO you work for:
6. How many staff members does your organisation have .....
  - 6.1 How many of these are National .....International.....
  - 6.2 When did the NGO start its activities here in this region.....
7. What are the main activities of the NGO in this region:
8. Given the overall objectives of your organisation, do you find that the organisation has the necessary competence within your own staff to achieve the goals you have set?  
 if not, what are the major weaknesses.....
9. What kind of contact do you have with the main office(s) of the organisation:
  - 9.1 Is the regional office authorised to seek its own funding :
  - 9.2 Is the regional office authorised to decide on selection of projects to be implemented:
  - 9.3 Is the regional office authorised to commit the NGO towards decisions made in local coordinating bodies:
10. What contact and relationship does your NGO have with Afghan authorities:
11. What is the your organisation's policy when it comes to coordination with other relief agencies:

**NGO AND THE COMMUNITY**

12. What do you see as the major characteristics of a non-governmental organisation:
13. What do you see as the most important aspects of the term "community participation"?
14. What community organisations does your organisation work with;
15. What is the influence of the beneficiaries on your project planning

**COORDINATION**

16. What is your understanding of a successful coordination

- 16.1 Can you mention an example of successful coordination:  
 16.2 Can you mention an example of failed coordination:  
 17.a) In what manner do your agencies co-ordinate at the village level:  
 17.b) Do you see coordination at this lever best facilitated through a permanent structure or on a more informal basis:  
 18. In what manner do the your agency co-ordinate at the regional level:  
 18.b) Do you see coordination at this lever best facilitated through a permanent structure or on a more informal basis:  
 19.a) In what manner does your agency co-ordinate at the country level:  
 19.b) Do you see coordination at this lever best facilitated through a permanent structure or on a more informal basis:  
 20. Can you see any negative effects of a closer coordination with other NGOs  
 21. Can you see any negative effects of a closer coordination with UN agencies  
 22. WHAT TYPES OF COORDINATION EFFORTS DO YOU REGARD AS MOST USEFUL FOR YOUR NGO:

Rank between :      Not Useful      Partly Useful      Useful      Very Useful

1. Sharing of general information between NGOs
2. Sharing of specific project information
3. Agreeing on common standards and guidelines for NGOs
4. Agreeing on joint policies for NGOs working in Afghanistan
5. Having Beneficiary representatives in NGO coordinating bodies
6. Having Donor representatives in NGO coordinating bodies
7. Having authority representatives in NGO coordinating bodies
8. Agreeing on common NGO programmes
9. Applying for common funding with other NGOs
10. Applying for common funding with UN agencies

Other suggestions:.....

23. Do you believe that the effectiveness of the total assistance to Afghanistan could be improved through a closer cooperation between NGOs?  
 24. What do you regard as your organisations major benefit from being a member of a coordinating body:  
 25. How do the coordinating bodies represent the interests of beneficiaries ?  
 26. Should any Coordinating body represent the NGOs towards Afghan authorities?

27. YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE WORK OF AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THESE COORDINATING BODIES :

Described with:    Poor      Fair      Good      Excellent      *No information*

Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)  
 Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB)  
 Islamic Coordinaton Council (ICC)  
 NGOs' Coordination Body (NCB)  
 South Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan  
(OCHA)

**28. WHAT SANCTIONS ARE SUITABLE FOR A NGO COORDINATING BODY IF A MEMBER ORGANISATION REPEATEDLY DENIES TO COMPLY TO AGREED STANDARDS OR DECISIONS:**

Asked to either state AGREE or I DISAGREE

1. No Sanctions
2. Written notification
3. Temporary loss of membership in coordination body
4. Permanent loss of membership in coordinaton body
5. Notification of loss of membership to all NGOs
6. Notification of loss of membership to donors
7. Notification of loss of membership to authorities
8. Request for donors to cut funding for the NGO
9. Request for authorities to impose sanctions on the NGO

**Other**.....

**29. Are you familiar with the proposed Common Programming process ?**

Yes.....

No.....

28.1 Have your agency been involved in this process?

28.2 Have the regional office been involved?

28.2 What do you see as possible advantages of the Common Programming ?

28.3 What do you see as possible disadvantages of the Common Programming ?

**30. Is there any type of NGOs that you find it more difficult to cooperate with than others:**

**MINES ACTION COORDINATION**

31. What do you do if you suspect that there is a mine problem in one of your project areas?

32. If you have contacted a mine action agency for assistance, how would you evaluate their response?

33. Shifting the attention to coordination between mine action agencies, what is your assessment?

34. How do you assess the role of OCHA in coordinating mine action?

35. Do you have comments to the questions or further information on coordination issues?

NOTES:



## Form 5

**INTERVIEW FORM : NGO DIRECTORS, PAKISTAN and AFGHANISTAN**

Interview date:

Carried out by :

Time:

Place:

Setting

**PERSONALIA**

1. Name of respondent:

2. Organisation

3. Position of interv

4. Employment with organisation

**INFORMATION ABOUT NGO AND THEIR ACTIVITIES**

5. What are the main objectives of the NGO you work with?

6. How many staff members are employed in your organisation?

6.1 How many of these are National/ International

7. What type of NGO would you define your organisation to be ?

Afghan

Islamic

Western/

Donor

International

Other.....

7.1 When did the NGO start its activities ?.....

8. What do you see as the major problems people in Afghanistan are faced with at the moment?

9. What do you see as the major problems NGOs working in Afghanistan are faced with at the moment ?

10. What are the main areas of work your NGO is involved in?

11. Do you find that the organisation has the necessary competence within your staff to achieve the goals set?

12. To which extent is the regional/field office(s) of the organisation granted autonomy?

13. What contact and relationship does your NGO have with Afghan authorities?

14. What is your organisation's policy when it comes to coordination with other relief agencies:

**THE NGO AND THE COMMUNITY**

15. What do you see as the major characteristics of a non-governmental organisation:

16. What do you see as the most important aspects of the term "community participation"?

17. What community organisations does your organisation work with;

18. What is the influence of the beneficiaries on your project planning

## THE NGO AND THE DONOR(S)

19. Who are your major donors?

UN	Governments	Donor NGOs	Private	Others
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

20. Can you list some positive and negative experiences with donors?

21. How could donors ensure that their assistance is reaching the beneficiaries in the most cost efficient way?

22. Should donors be involved in coordination of humanitarian assistance?

## COORDINATION

23. What is your understanding of a successful coordination?

23.1 Can you mention an example of successful coordination?

23.2 Can you mention an example of failed coordination?

24. In what manner does your agency co-ordinate your humanitarian work at different levels, i.e. in the field, regional and national level:

25. Do you see coordination, at the various levels, best facilitated through a permanent structure or on a more informal basis:

26. What do you see as the most important tasks of a coordinating body

27. Should the coordinating bodies apply sanctions on members that are not complying with agreements reached or guidelines set by this body?

28. Can you see any negative effects of a closer coordination with other NGOs?

29. Can you see any negative effects of a closer coordination with UN agencies?

30. Do you believe that the effectiveness of the total assistance to Afghanistan could be improved through a closer cooperation between NGOs?

31. What do you regard as your organisations major benefit from being a member of a coordinating body:

32. In what way could the coordinating bodies able to represent the interests and views of beneficiaries ?

33. Should a Coordinating body represent the NGOs towards Afghan authorities, or is this better done by each Agency?

## COMMON PROGRAMMING

34. Have your NGO been involved in the Common Programming process ?

Yes..... No.....

35. What do you see as possible advantages of the Common Programming?

36. What do you see as possible disadvantages of the Common Programming?

37. Is there any type of NGOs that you find it more difficult to cooperate with than others:

## MINES ACTION COORDINATION

38. If you have contacted a mine action agency for assistance, how would you evaluate their response?

39. Shifting the attention to coordination between mine action agencies, what is your assessment?
40. How do you assess the role of OCHA in coordinating mine action?
41. If there should be a sudden influx of 100 000 Afghan returnees to Afghanistan, would your agency be able to respond with assistance to these?
42. What do you see as the best way to coordinate such a relief operation?
43. Do you have comments to the questions or further information on coordination issues

NOTES:

## Form 6

**SURVEY FORM FOR AFGHAN SURVEYERS****Enjil, Herat province, Afghanistan**

Date: -

Interviewer: -

Duration: -

Translator: -

Setting of interview: -

Assessment of interview: -

**A RESPONDENT PERSONALIA**

1.Name: -

1.1.Village: -

2.Mahalla: -

2.1.Where are you born? -

3.Occupation: -

4b.Can you read and write? Yes No

5.Age? -

6.Qaum? -

7.Married? Yes No

8.1.How many offspring do you have?

0-6 years -

7-12 years -

Age 13 and above			Residence					
Boy	Girl	Age	With family	In village	In neighbour village/Herat	In Afghanistan	In Iran	Type of job

8.2.Who are the others living in your household here, at the moment?

8.2.1.Which members of the household contribute with an income?

9.1.Does your family own land? Yes No

9.1.1.If YES, how much land do you cultivate annually?

9.1.1b.If YES, how much land do you have in total?

9.1.3.Does your family rent land? Yes No

9.2b.Does your family have other sources of income? Yes No

9.6.Does the household have animals? Yes No

## **B LOCAL STRUCTURE, MAHALLA**

10.How many households are there in this mahalla?

10.1.How many people from this mahalla have been migrants?

11.Are there many refugees that have not returned?

11.2.Do you know if the remaining refugees are planning to return?

11.3.If they do not plan to return, why?

12.From those that returned to the mahalla, have many left again?

13.What are the main types of income in this mahalla?

14.From this mahalla, are there many going for jobs outside the village?

141.If you are concerned about the security situation in the area, who would you ask for information?

## **C LOCAL STRUCTURE, VILLAGE**

21b.Is there any *shura* in the village? Yes No

21.If YES, what do you see as the main responsibilities of the *shura*?

22.When was the *shura* established?

23.What was the situation before the establishment of the *shura*?

26.It there is a decision to be taken in the village, for example regarding the placement of waterpumps, would you ask women for advice?

28b.Which neighbouring villages do you visit frequently?

29b.For what purpose would you go to Herat city?

29.1b&29.2b.Visit relatives -

29.3b&29.4b.Work/Business -

29.6b.Shopping -

29.8b.Medical -

29.7b.Other (specify): -

142.What do you do if a member of the family gets seriously ill and you need money for treatment?

142.1a.If you need to take a loan, who could you ask?

## **D MIGRATION 1: DEPARTURE**

33.1.Had any member of the family been abroad before the war?

30b.Have you been a migrant? Yes No

If YES:

Before 1978 -

1978-1992 -

1992-present -

If YES, continue on next page

If NO, go to page 9

31.What were the major reasons that you left?

32.b. When did you leave the first time?

33. What was the destination?

33.1. Had any member of the family members been at the destination before you came there as a refugee?

Yes No

34. Who did you know at the destination?

37. Who did you leave together with?

37.1. Family members:

37.2. others (specify):

38. How did you raise the money for the trip?

38.1. If you borrowed money for the trip, who did you borrow from?

## **E MIGRATION 2: ABROAD**

50. Did you stay in one location, or did you move between several locations when you were outside I. S.?

Town	Part of town	Length of stay

51. Did you come back to the village during this period?

53. What sort of documents did you receive?

59. Did you receive any assistance as refugees?

If YES from whom?

63. How did you earn your income when you were living outside the village?

56. Did anybody assist you with finding a job? Who?

63.1.1. Who did you work together with?

Iranian

Afghan

People from my own village

Relatives

66. Did you have contact with any mujahedin parties when you were staying abroad?

67. Did you have any contact with relatives or acquaintances where you stayed?

Yes No

51.2b. What sort of contact did you have with people at your home place when you were staying abroad?

## **F MIGRATION 3: RETURN & RESETTLEMENT**

70. When did you return?

71. What was the main reason that made you come back to the village?

74. Who else did you travel with when you returned?

Family (specify) -

Others (specify) -

76.What did you bring with you when you came back to the village.? (money; household items; building mat.)

91.What were the biggest challenges you met when resettling in the village?

**FOR THOSE WHO DID NOT MIGRATE**

(who said NO on question 30b, page 5):

160.Which family members stayed here with you ?

161.Have any member of the family been migrants? Yes No

161.1.if YES, when did they leave?

161.2.if YES, where did they go?

161.3..if NO, has many people from the mahalla been migrants? Yes No

161.4.if YES, when did they leave?

161.5.if YES, where did they go?

162.How would you describe the political and military situation when they were absent?

163.Which political groups and parties were active in your village?

164.If you were concerned about the security situation in the village during the war, who did you ask for advice?

165.What contact did you have with people that left from the village during the war?

166.What were the major reasons that you did not leave during the war?

167.Did anybody at any point encourage you to leave?

168.Were you faced with any major problems during that time?

169.Were there any assistance given to the village during that time?

170.What was your major sources of income during this period?

171.Did you have any property or business here that had to be taken care of?

172.Did you in any period leave the village during the daytime because of war?

173..Did you for shorter periods leave for a different location? Yes No

173.2.if YES, for where?

174.The people who left the village during the war, where did they go?

neighbouring villages -

Herat -

abroad (specify) -

175.Who did they know at the destination?

175.1 .Did you have any contacts at that destination?

176.Who did the refugees leave together with?

177.How did they finance their travel?

178.Who did they stay together with while outside the village?

179.What opportunities did they have to make an income at the destination?

180.When did they return?

181.For those who returned after the war, what were the major reasons for them deciding to come back?

182.Did they leave again after their first return? Yes No

182.1.if YES, where did they go?

neighbouring villages -

Herat -

abroad -

183.For those who did not return after the war, what were the major reasons for not

returning?

184. Are there many families from the village that have not returned?

(Remaining questions are for ALL respondents)

90. Are any of your relatives staying abroad today? Yes No

If YES: -

90.1. Who ? -

90.2. What contact do you have with them? -

90.3. Do they contribute to the economy of your household? Yes No

93b. What kind of work do women do in this village?

Housework -

Agricultural Work -

Animal Husbandry -

Weaving -

Other (specify) -

## **H ASSISTANCE:**

100. How would you describe the economic situation of your village?

102. What do you see as the most important needs of the village?

105. Do you know about any aid organisations that works or has worked in the village?

Agency	Type of project	Beneficiaries		
		Men	Women	Family

106. Have you in any manner benefited from the support of relief agencies?

107. Do you know the difference between an NGO and an UN agency?

109. Who are these agencies consulting in the village?

110. From your experience, are the agencies working together or separately?

114b. How would you get in contact with humanitarian agencies?

## **I LANDMINES AND UXO's**

122. In what manner has your household been affected by landmines or UXOs?

122.1 .Accidents (describe) -

122.2 .Economic problems (describe) -

122.3. Travel and Transport problems (describe) -

124. How would you describe the local situation today regarding landmines and UXOs? -



127. What activities have been undertaken to deal with the problem of landmines and UXO's here? Describe activities by aid agencies, the government, as well as people from the community:
- 127.1 .Demining (describe): -
  - 127.2. Information (describe): -
  - 127.3. Marking (describe): -
  - 127.4 .Victim assistance (describe): -
  - 127.5. Has anybody in the local community contacted agencies to get assistance to deal with the problem of landmines and UXOs? Who?
128. Who did the demining agencies relate to in the village?
130. Do you fully trust the land that has been cleared by the deminers?
132. Have you attended any mine awareness lessons?
133. What were the most important messages that you learnt from this?
139. Are you familiar with any work, in Afghanistan or internationally, that aims at a ban on the use of landmines?
137. Do you see any principal difference between the use of landmines and the use of other types of weapons?

## **SURVEY FORM II: FOR RECENTLY RETURNED MIGRANTS**

151. How did you leave Iran?
- Voluntarily -
  - Expelled -
  - Other reason (specify) -
152. If expelled
- 152.1. Where were you arrested?
  - 152.2. When were you arrested?
  - 152.3. Who were you together with when you were arrested?
    - Alone -
    - With family -
    - With Afghans -
    - With Iranians -  - 152.4. What place were you brought to?
  - 152.5. Who was running the place?
    - Iranian Police -
    - Iranian Army -
    - United Nations -  - 152.6. How many Afghans were there in this place?
  - 152.7. How long time did you stay in this place?
  - 152.8. Were you allowed to make contact with your family? Yes No
  - 152.9 .How many persons were expelled together with you?
  - 152.10. Were you expelled together with your family members? Yes No
  - 152.10.1. If NO, is your family still in Iran

For both expelled and voluntary returned:

153. Did you receive any assistance for your repatriation? Yes No
- 153.1. If YES specify assistance
  - 153.2. Where did you receive the assistance?
  - 153.3. Did you have to pay for any assistance?

154. Where are you living now?

In own house -

With family -

With relatives -

With friends -

Rented house -

154.1. How many persons are living in your household?

155. Have you had any problems after your return? Yes No

If YES, can you give examples:

156. What are you planning to do now?

Work on farm -

Job in Village -

Job in Herat -

Job outside Herat (where?) -

Job in Iran -

156.1. Who are you discussing these alternatives with?

156.2. What factors are most important for you in making your decision?

157. If you are planning to go back Iran?

157.1. When are you planning to leave?

157.2. Who will you ask to arrange your travel?

157.3. How will you finance your travel?

158. What would make you decide to stay in the village?

**159. COMMENTS OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Form 7

**SURVEY FORM****NGO COORDINATING BODIES****Survey questionnaire**

This is an anonymous survey, where you don't need to fill in name or your organisation or your own name. Should you though like to draw our attention to particular issues please write to us by mail or email us.

**A) NGO INFORMATION****1. Which type of NGO would you describe your organisations as?**

National NGO

Western NGO

Islamic NGO

Donor NGO

**2. What is the main objective of your NGO?**

.....

**3. How many staff members are permanently employed?**

National .....

International .....

**4. When did the NGO start its activities in Pakistan or Afghanistan?**

Before 1988

1988 – 1992

1992- 1996

After 1996

**5. Who are your major donors?**

UN

EU

Governmental  
DonorsPrivate  
DonorsDonor  
NGO

Others

**6. What is the orientation of your assistance?**

i) Emergency relief

Rehabilitation

Development

Social

Infrastructure

ii) Urban

Rural

Both

7. Which type of activities is the NGO engaged in provision of?

Health	Education	Agriculture	Social services	Irrigation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Income generation	Drinking water	Infrastructure	Mine Action	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. What contact and relationship does your NGO have with Afghan authorities

i) At national level:

Signed MoU	Informing them on activities	No contact
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ii) At local level:

Signed MoU	Informing them on activities	No contact
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. What do you regard as the NGOs “comparative advantages” for working in Afghanistan?

1..... 2.....  
3.....

10. Would you favour a proposal to encourage more business oriented NGOs to register themselves as private companies ?

Yes	No	No opinion
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, would you favour a special support programme to enable this transition, with i.e. management training and a revolving loan system?

Yes	No	No opinion
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**B) COORDINATION**

11. What types of coordination efforts do you regard as most useful for your NGO?

Not Useful    Partly Useful    Useful    Very Useful

Sharing of general information				
Sharing of specific project information				
Setting up thematic/debate groups ( f.ex. on development or NGO perspective on human rights)				
Presenting projects for other NGOs before implementation is decided				
Agreeing on common standards and guidelines for NGOs				
Setting of joint policies for NGOs				
Agreeing on geographical areas for where the NGOs should prioritise to work				
Agreeing on priority field, i.e. health, for NGOs to work in				
Agree on integrated programmes with other NGOs				

Othersuggestions.....

12. What services should an NGO coordinating body provide for members?

1..... 2..... 3.....

13. What have been your organisation's major benefits from being a member of a coordinating body:

1..... 2..... 3.....

14. Should the Coordinating body represent the NGOs in

discussions with Afghan authorities?

YES

☐

NO

☐

15. At which level would the following coordination efforts be best facilitated?

<i>Type of coordination</i>	Village	Region	<i>National</i>
Coordination of single NGO projects			
Setting area or project priorities			
Deciding on common policies			
Cooperation between NGO Coordinating Bodies			
Cooperation with UN agencies			
Cooperation with Afghan authorities			

16. In which city should the main office of a coordination body , situation permitting, be located in?

Peshawar

☐

Islamabad

☐

Quetta

☐

Kabul

☐**17. YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE WORK OF AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THESE COORDINATING BODIES :**Poor Fair Good Excellent *No info.*

ACBAR					
ANCB					
ICC					
NCB (Herat)					
SWABAC					
UN OCHA					

18. Should an NGO coordination body use sanctions against members that refuses or avoids to follow commonly agreed guidelines or decisions:

Yes

☐

No

☐

If yes, what types of sanctions would you find suitable.....

### C) PRINCIPLED COMMON PROGRAMMING

**19. Have your agency been involved in the Principled Common Programming process?**

Yes

No



**20. Do you feel that the interests of the NGOs are properly cared for in the process?**

Yes

No



**21. What do you see as possible advantages of the Principled Common Programming ?**

1..... 2.....

3.....

**22. What do you see as possible disadvantages of the Principled Common Programming?**

1..... 2.....

3.....

**23. Do you agree to the statement that humanitarian assistance has become politicised during the last year?**

Yes

No

No opinion




**24. From your point of view, what should now be happening to the Principled Common Programming process ?**

Speeded up

Revised

Stopped

No opinion





Other

options:.....

### D) COORDINATION FOR THE FUTURE

**25. Do you see NGO coordination best done through one or several coordinating bodies ?**

One

Several

**26. If your preference is for one coordination body, please answer the following**

**a) Should it be an entirely new body or rather build on one of the existing coordinating bodies?**

New

☐

Existing

☐

**b) How could the interests of the members of the present bodies best be ensured?**

.....

**c) What would be the most important issues to address to enable such an establishment?**

1..... 2..... 3.....

**d) If you have a model to propose please describe it or draw a diagram on the back page**

**27. If your preference is for several coordinating bodies, please answer the following**

**a) Do you see a need for a closer cooperation between the present coordinating bodies?**

Yes

☐

No

☐

If yes, what type of cooperation do you envisage

On an ad hoc basis

☐

On a regular basis

☐

**c) Please indicate which of the following arrangements and ways of cooperation that you find suitable for such a model, if any?**

Sharing meetings   Sharing building   Sharing resources   Sharing administration

☐
☐
☐
☐

Joint policies  
statements

Joint projects

Joint strategies

Joint

☐
☐
☐
☐

Notes:



## Appendix 7: Interview Details

Document	Village/town	Occupation	Age	Migrant	Organisation	Position
Af-S611	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	50s	Yes		
Af-S612	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	30s	Yes		
Af-S613	Sara-e Nau	Labourer	30s	Yes		
Af-S614	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	50s	No		
Af-S615	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	30s	Yes		
Af-S616	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	60s	Yes		
Af-S617	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	20s	No		
Af-S618	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	20s	No		
Af-S619	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	40s	No		
Af-S620	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	40s	No		
Af-S621	Sara-e Nau	Labourer	20s	No		
Af-S624	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	30s	Yes		
Af-S625	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	40s	No		
Af-S626	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	20s	No		
Af-S627	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	50s	Yes		
Af-S628	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	50s	Yes		
Af-S629	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	70s	Yes		
Af-S630	Sara-e Nau	Agriculture	20s	Yes		
Af-S600	IS	Labourer	30s	Yes		
Af-S601	IS	Teacher	20s	No		
Af-S602	IS	Agriculture	70s	Yes		
Af-S603	IS	Labourer	40s	Yes		
Af-S604	IS	Agriculture	20s	Yes		
Af-S605	IS	Labourer	40s	Yes		
Af-S606	IS	Agriculture	30s	Yes		
Af-S607	IS	Labourer	50s	Yes		
Af-S608	IS	Agriculture	20s	Yes		
Af-S609	IS	Agriculture	40s	No		
Af-S610	IS	Agriculture	60s	No		

Document	Village/town	Occupation	Age	Migrant	Organisation	Position
		Animal				
Af-S622	IS	husbandry	30s	Yes		
Af-S623	IS	Labourer	30s	Yes		
Af-PR501	IS	Agriculture	40s	Yes		
Af-PR502	IS	Business	30s	Yes		
Af-PR503	IS	Agriculture	40s	Yes		
Af-PR504	IS	Agriculture	20s	NA		
Af-PR505	IS	Agriculture	40s	Yes		
		Animal				
Af-PR506	IS	husbandry	20s	Yes		
Af-PR507	IS	Agriculture	40s	Yes		
Af-PR508	IS	Agriculture	20s	Yes		
Af-PR509	IS	Agriculture	40s	No		
Af-PR510	IS	Agriculture	40s	Yes		

Af-PR511	IS	Agriculture	20s	Yes		
Af-PR512	IS	Agriculture	40s	Yes		
Af-PR513	IS	Agriculture	30s	No		
Af-PR514	IS	Agriculture	30s	Yes		
		Animal				
Af-PR515	IS	husbandry	30s	Yes		
		Animal				
Af-PR516	IS	husbandry	30s	Yes		
Af-PR517	IS	Dissabled	20s	Yes		
Af-PR518	IS	Business	40s	Yes		
Af-PR519	IS	Agriculture	50s	No		
Af-PR520	IS	Agriculture	NA	NA		
Af-PR521	IS	Agriculture	NA	NA		
AF-PR010	IS	Business	50s	Yes		
AF-PR011	IS	Casual labour	20s	Yes		
AF-PR012	IS	Business	30s	Yes		
AF-PR013	IS	Business	70s	Yes		
AF-PR014	IS	Agriculture	50s	Yes		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Village/town</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Migrant</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>
AF-PR015	IS	Animal husbandry	30s	Yes		
AF-PR016	IS	Agriculture	70s	Yes		
AF-PR017	IS	Business	20s	No		
AF-PR018	IS	Jobless	20s	Yes		
AF-PR019	IS	Business	20s	Yes		
AF-PR020	IS	Animal husbandry	30s	Yes		
AF-PR022	IS	Agriculture	60s	Yes		
AF-PR201	IS	Housewife	20s	Yes		
AF-PR202	IS	Housewife	30s	No		
AF-PR203	IS	Housewife	30s	Yes		
AF-PR204	IS	Housewife	30s	Yes		
AF-PR205	IS	Housewife	20s	Yes		
AF-PR206	IS	Housewife	30s	Yes		
AF-PR207	IS	Housewife	40s	Yes		
AF-PR208	IS	Widow	60s	Yes		
AF-PR209	IS	Housewife	30s	Yes		
AF-PR210	IS	Housewife	20s	Yes		
AF-	IS	Housewife	30s	Yes		

PR211							
AF-PR212	IS	Housewife	50s	Yes			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Village/town</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Migrant</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>	
AF-PR213	IS	Housewife	60s	Yes			
AF-PR214	IS	Housewife	20s	Yes			
AF-PR215	IS	Housewife	40s	Yes			
AF-PR216	IS	Housewife	30s	Yes			
AF-PR217	Hause Q	Teacher	30s	Yes			
AF-PR218	Hause Q	Teacher	40s	Yes			
AF-W640	Sara-e-Nau	Housewife	40s	No			
AF-W641	Sara-e-Nau	Housewife	30s	No			
AF-W642	Sara-e-Nau	Housewife	20s	No			
AF-W643	Sara-e-Nau	Housewife	30s	No			
AF-W644	Sara-e-Nau	Unemployed	30s	No			
AF-W645	Sara-e-Nau	Housewife	30s	No			
AF-LH043	Herat		30s		MFA Herat	Minister	
AF-OK037	Kabul		40s		Western NGO	Volunteer	
AF-OK040	Kabul		30s		Western NGO	Director	
AF-OK041	Kabul		40s		Afghan NGO	Manager	
AF-OL038	Kabul		40s		Afghan NGO	Manager	
AF-PRO25	Herat		30s		Afghan NGO	Teacher	
AF-PRO26	Herat		30s		Afghan NGO	Field worker	
AF-PRO30	Herat		20s		Western NGO	Doctor	
AF-PRO31	Herat		40s		Afghan NGO	Field Director	
AF-PRO32	Herat		30s		Afghan NGO	Field Director	
AF-PRO33	Herat		40s		Afghan NGO	Field Director	
<b>Document</b>	<b>Village/town</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Migrant</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>	
AF-PRO35	Herat		30s		Afghan NGO	Director	
AF-PRO36	Herat		30s		Afghan NGO	Field Director	
AF-PRO44	Herat		40s		Coord.body	Manager	
AF-PRO45	Herat		50s		Coord.body	Manager	
AF-PRO46	Herat		30s		IGO	Project Manager	
AF-PRO49	Herat		30s		MFA Herat	Minister	
AF-	Herat		50s		Western	Field Director	

## Appendix 7: Interview Details

PRO50				NGO	
AF-				Research	
PRO51	Peshawar	30s		Inst.	Researcher
AF-				Western	
PRO60	Peshawar	30s		NGO	Director
AF-				Afghan	Regional
PR131	Kabul	30s		NGO	Manager
AF-					
PR132	Kabul	40s		UN	Manager
AF-				Western	
PR133	Kabul	50s		NGO	Director
AF-				Afghan	
PR134	Peshawar	30s		NGO	Director

## **Appendix 8: Report for Izhaq Suleiman village**

**ENJIL DISTRICT, HERAT PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN**

**Report presented to the village *shura*, 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 1999**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Izhaq Suleiman was subject for the investigation of a team of 3 Norwegian researchers for a period of 3 weeks in April 1999. The three researchers shared a common focus on the return of refugees. Individually, the researchers had their particular interests in: 1) the coordination of humanitarian assistance; 2) gender-differentiation of assistance; 3) mine action and community participation. The team, consisting of the three researchers with their translators, benefited from the close cooperation of the *shura*, represented by the arbab and the president of the *shura*. We are also grateful acknowledge the assistance provided by the staff of the Afghan Mine Awareness Association (AMAA), and its director Daud Dildar, who introduced us to Izhaq Suleiman. Lastly, we want to extend our warmest thanks to the inhabitants of Izhaq Suleiman, who offered their hospitality, and generously spent their time in a busy season to answer our many inquisitive questions. Our hope is that this report will prove useful for the improvement of the lives of the people of Izhaq Suleiman.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The report is based on meetings with the *shura* and on semi-structured interviews, complemented by informal discussions with *shura* members and a wide range of villagers. After an initial round of open interviews, the three members of the team used their preliminary findings to develop a coordinated semistructured questionnaire which includes a core of common questions to be pursued within our interviews with villagers, both male and female. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 45 villagers, 28 males interviewed by the male researchers and 17 females by the female researcher, covering all 10 mahallas of the village. The activities in the village was observed at different times during the day, and at different locations such as in the agricultural fields, in the village "bazaar", at the mill, or around mosques. A conscious effort was made to include all sort of respondents through varying sites and times for selecting informants, the team, however, makes no claim to have developed a random sample.

### **THE ORIGIN OF THE VILLAGE**

We were told that the village was established by two brothers, Izhaq and Suleiman, of the Jaghatai tribe, who came from Badghis hundreds of years ago. The fortress of mud, located in Mahalla Masjid-e Jahme, also called the "old village", is said to be 500 to 600 years old. The area around the fort has old arches and passages built by

sun-dried bricks, according to local tradition all remnants of the original settlement here.

### **GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

The village is situated on the south side of the Herat - Islam Qala Highway, 14 km. from Herat at approximately 980 metres above sea-level. On the other side of the road, about 500 metres towards Herat, there is a major tank base of the Afghan Army, named Khwa-e char saridar

On the upper side of the village pasture and shrub lands extend in to a low mountain range, where the village inhabitants keep their herds of sheep, and where they collect bushes used as firewood. These outskirts represent common land to which individual herders have access without claiming private property rights. The village is clustered along a road and a riverbed, and is surrounded by fields of agricultural land. On the lower side of the village the fields extends on an almost level plateau towards the neighbouring villages.

### ***Contact with Neighbouring villages***

The villagers listed a number of neighbouring villages in which they have contact with relatives or where they are trading, most located within a walking distance of one hour. Inter-marriage between the villages seem frequent, judging by household data. Relations are also maintained through a number of social and religious ceremonies linked both to marriage and death. Such relations are also important for the more general exchange of resources. Several of the neighbouring villages have land that borders that of Izhaq Suleiman, and many of these are dependent on the same water source - the Jui Nau, being a key factor in agricultural production for the area. The following is a list of the villages that the inhabitants of Izhaq Suleiman report to visit frequently:

Jibrail  
Khoshk Rod  
Shadih Bareh  
Mahalla-e-Bala  
Rabat Jahn Khan  
Kariz-e Nau  
Qalata

### ***Contact with Herat***

The village is located at a thirty minutes drive from Herat and has a significant level of contact with the city, for a variety of purposes. Herat provides the market for the farm products, as it does for bushes and wood that is collected in the surrounding mountains and dry plains. The inhabitants of the village also go to the city to make larger purchases for their household or their business. Many villagers go to Herat for work, mainly as day labour, some as masons specialising in dome roofs, and a few hold posts within the public services such as the hospital. Only a few persons are said to be living in Herat while owning land or other property in the village. A major reason to visit Herat, given especially by female informants, is the need for medical assistance.

***Contact with Iran***

From the village to Islam Qala at the Iranian border there is a two and a half hours drive. There has been a high degree of labour migration to Iran since the early 1970s. During the war a substantial share of the population were refugees in Iran, although it seems that many of those who went were bachelors rather than families. The need to avoid conscription is a reason frequently given for seeking refuge. The refugee experience led to strengthened contacts with, and knowledge about the Iranian labour market. Presently, there is a high degree of labour migration, additional income from Iran is an important part of the household economy for many families living in Izhaq Suleiman. Iran has closed the border with Afghanistan for the last year, which has made access to Iran more difficult for the villagers. Currently, the only Afghans that can cross the border are those leaving Iran through the border post at Islam Qala. All trade between Iran and Afghanistan goes now through Turkmenistan, or through the smuggling routes in Nimroz.

**HOUSEHOLD DATA**

Based on interviews with key informants at the mahalla level, we arrived at the rough estimate of 630 families in the village. This figure excludes families still residing in Iran, but it includes 20 families that are internally displaced from Badghis. We assume an average family size of 7 persons, based on systematic household data from 27 of the households, which is higher than the average of 5 persons that is suggested in UNICEF's 1997 Baseline Indicators Report. The estimate for the village population is then 4410 persons.

The number of villagers temporary working and residing in Iran, average approximately 1 persons for each family. We then arrive at a rough estimate for the total village population of 5040 persons. We find it important to underline that this figure is not intended to be used as a baseline or as a justification for any project undertaken in the village. A major concern at the time of writing (April -99) is the ongoing forced expulsion of Afghans from Iran. In case of a total expulsion this would add an estimated 630 adults to the village population.

Extrapolating from our sample of 17 households, that shows an age distribution of 66 % under 15 years and 33 % above 15 years, indicates a numerical proportion of 1470 adults to 2940 children. This relation gives an indication of the dependency ratio between adults and dependents children. We should, however, note that children under 15 years often make significant contributions to the household economy, whereas a portion of the grown up population, including the old and the disabled are also partly of fully dependent on the income of others.

In case of a total repatriation, this would (as noted above) add an estimated 630 adults to the village population. This would both significantly alter the relation between producers and consumers, and signify the loss of a major source of income (remittance from labour migrants), as well as create further pressure on the local labour market.

We have made no formal registration, but have observed a high number of disabled men. Most of those have been subject to mine incidents, but some have had work accidents in Iran. The fact that a sizeable portion of the male adult population is disabled has long term effects on the composition of productive labour in the village.

## VILLAGE STRUCTURE

The village is divided into 10 mahallas ('neighbourhoods') named after the mosques of these areas. Many of the mahallas are known by several names, which easily adds confusion to the use of the mahalla names for administrative purposes. One observation was that women would often be unfamiliar with the mahalla names being officially used. Below we give the names of the mahallas as presented by the *shura*:

Masjid Arbab Khalil  
Masjid Haji Juma  
Masjid Eidgah  
Masjid Ghulam Yahya  
Masjid Sara-e Nau  
Masjid Jahme (grand mosque)  
Masjid Chinar  
Masjid Haji Ghulam Rasul  
Masjid Rabat-e Bala  
Masjid Qala-e Zuria

The village was heavily affected by a flood in 1992. Parts of the village were rebuilt after the flood damage, for example in Mahalla Arbab Khalil and in Haji Ghulam Yahaya. A few families shifted their houses to the higher parts of the village. Severe floods have, according to the *shura*, hit the village in 1959, 1972, and in 1976. There was also a dramatic flood in the spring of 1999, where one woman was killed.

## VILLAGE SHURA

The Shura was initially established in 1992, on the instruction of the provincial governor at the time, Ismael Khan. In 1997 it was expanded on the initiative of AREA, an Afghan NGO. The *shura* took on a set of new responsibilities. The decisions of the *shura* are recorded, they have regular meetings each Friday after prayer-time, and extra meeting upon need. The *shura* presently has 20 members, representing the different mahallas. The President of the *shura* is Maulawi Mohammad Usman, Vice Presidents are Ghulam Sakhi and Mohammad Alam, and the treasurer is Arbab Bashir Ahmad. The present *shura* was elected at a village meeting and members can be changed upon the request of the villagers.

The *shura* stays in close contact with the District Administration on administrative matters. Maulawi Mohammad Usman is dealing with religious matters as the village representative to the weekly meeting of the Religious *shura* in the Great Mosque in Herat. Arbab Bashir Ahmad is playing an very important administrative role within the *shura*, and as a representative and problem-solver in the relation with neighbouring villages, the District Administration, the water-supply network and with NGOs and UN agencies. During our period of work in the village, the major task was to secure the watersupply through Jui-e Nau, which included the organisation of a community work force, collection of funds for the work, and negotiations with other stakeholders in the channel.



The *shura* is currently running a micro credit program and a energy saving program together with AREA. Four members of the *shura*, including Maulawi Mohammad Usman and Arbab Bashir Ahmad make up a Mine *shura* established by AMAA to be responsible to report on mine incidents and needs for mine action to the regional mine action centre of OCHA.

### **ETHNIC GROUPS**

The village has a wide ethnic composition, the following groups were recorded during our study:

Turkmen, Tajik, Jagatai,, Jamshidi, Pashtun, Arab, Timori and Sayed.

Our household data indicate that intermarriage between ethnic groups is frequent both within the village and with neighbouring villages.

### **MIGRATION PATTERNS**

The proximity to Iran has been influential for the villagers' labour and migration patterns, with a number of persons reporting to have worked in Iran during the 1970s. The general information about the conditions in Iran, and the contacts that some members of the village had, became important factors when a larger part of the population decided to leave for refugee in Iran following the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. The village is located close to an Afghan Army tank base, which had a dual effect on for its population. On the one hand it provided the villagers with a limited security from the government's side, on the other hand it was the target of mujahedin groups operating from neighbouring villages or at times using the village for their operations. The major reasons reported for departure during the war is fear of conscription to the Afghan army, the threat of war in general, and a difficult economic situation. When the mujahedin parties assumed power in 1992 a large number of the refugees returned, but a sizeable number remained in Iran. Some of these did hold a refugee status, some not. The majority were earning their income as labourers. A number of returnees have later left for Iran again, some with their families, due to economic hardship in the village. Presently, each family reports an average of one family member residing in Iran. A forced expulsion of Afghans from Iran will thus have a very large impact on the village.

### **LANDOWNERSHIP PATTERNS**

The estimate of the agricultural land area owned by the village ranges from 4200 to 6 000 Jeribs, with most of the land to the west and south of the village. There are a few landowners holding more than a 100 Jeribs, whereas the largest landholding is said to be 200 Jeribs. The majority of the farmers own smaller landholdings, and a large number of villagers only rent or borrow land for their agricultural production.

Currently a 3 year cycles for the use of the land is in place, which means that only a limited area of the total landholding is in use. A common rent arrangement is that the landowner receive a certain part of the production, according to the input he and the land he provides to the renter. For example; if the landowner only provides the land,

he will only receive 1/ 9 of the harvest. The arable land is divided in 3 parts, where the farmers have landholdings in each in part to ensure availability of water.

### **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

There are orchards, with a production of grapes and watermelons on a smaller part of the land. Most of the farming land belonging to the village is used for the production of wheat ( local variety). Production of seasonal crops such as cumin, also seems to be an important part of the agricultural economy.

A substantial share of the households holds cattle, but in most cases mainly for the needs of the household. Household animals are mainly cows/oxen (also used for ploughing), donkeys, sheep and goats. From interviews with females it appears that milk products are used as staple diet in consumption in households. In one Mahalla Qala-e- Zohria, the sale of milk products are cited as providing a major source of income. The animal husbandry in this mahalla both provides milk-products for own consumption, sale of milk from the house on a regular weekly or monthly delivery . The women also spin the wool and some are involved in carpet weaving.

Previously silk production was an income in the village, but the availability of good quality mulberry leaves has reportedly stopped this trade.

#### ***Farm power***

Many of the farmers are keeping donkeys for transport of goods and for travels, and some have horses. There are a few tractors in the village which can be rented by the farmers for ploughing of land.

#### ***Irrigation system***

The land is irrigated from a canal named Jui Nau, coming from the Hari Rud river. Jui Nau is 50 km long and the village is located towards its end. The water use of the village level is administrated through a Mirau, and there is an elected Wakil-e Mirau to oversee the agreed water-distribution of the entire canal. According to villagers the water distribution system is more than 500 years old, established by Hazrat Jami. There are constant arguments over water-distribution, and there is a permanent need for maintenance of the canal where villagers are mobilised according to amount of water allocated. It appears that the water distribution system is still not fully restored after the war, when the government closed of the lower parts of the canal, where a majority of the villages were controlled by the mujahedin. As a result both distribution problems and problems with maintenance, water is not sufficient to irrigate more than a share of the total agricultural area of the village.

The water-table under the village is reported to be at 20 - 22 meters depth. The village has an old covered water reservoir built of brick, which now is used as a place to water the cattle. There are also a number of rainfed ponds at different locations around the village, previously used for drinking water, now used only for watering of cattle. Four flood ways pass through the village, this is where the seasonal floods make their way, at times making substantial damage by undermining or washing away smaller or larger parts of agricultural land as well as residences.

## **BUSINESSES**

In Mahalla Arbab Khalil a number of shops and traders are located, such as the local butcher, a tailor and a few shops with a range of consumer commodities. In most of the mahallas there are small shops, with varying selection of groceries serving their neighbourhoods. The "punctureman" has his shop in a container at the main road, overseeing the village. He offers repair of car and bicycle tires, in addition he stocks stock petrol and oil-products.

A number of persons, primarily Turkmen women, are producing carpets for sale in Herat. There is a privately owned mill, run by diesel engine, that also serves the neighbouring villages. The mill is operating all year round. There is further a number of small buses and trucks that commuting to Herat, bringing the day labourers and the farmers selling their produce, and others, back and forth. The current busfare is given as 8000 Afs tour/retour.

There is a large force of unskilled labourers in the village, also a number of returned refugees and migrants with experienced from working in Iran mainly within the building and construction industry. Most of the villagers, male and female, have experience from agricultural seasonal work.

## **DRINKING WATER**

There is a good coverage of water-pumps in the village, installed by a number of NGOs and UNICEF. A few of the waterpumps are reportedly not functioning at the moment, and there seems to be no working system for maintenance and repair.. Some villagers emphasise that the number of illnesses was dramatically reduced as they started to use the pumps, no longer having to rely on pond water.

## **EDUCATION**

There are two partly overlapping educational systems in the village. The Qua-e-Char Saridar school, located close to the main road, has 300 male students, and 4 teachers are working there. The building has no doors or windows, and is only equipped with a few blackboards. The teachers reports that they only have a very limited supply of schoolbooks, and are lacking all kinds of teaching material.

The mosque schools (10) these are open for both boys and girls and operate in the afternoon. A high number of the children attend the education and the girls are allowed to attend for 4 to 5 years.

The mosque education focuses on recitation of the Holy Quran in Arabic, but also includes basic teaching of reading and writing Dari. No attempts were made by the team to go into an evaluation of quality and scope of this basic teaching.

We want to underline that there is a strong interest in education of their children, as evidenced by the priority given to these service by the people interviewed. The general education level is low among the adult population in the village. Very few villagers have completed secondary school or hold higher level degrees. At the same time, most of the families have some experience with from Iran in the past twenty

years, and have either seen, or directly benefited from, the Iranian educational system.

### **HEALTH PROBLEMS**

From observations and discussions with the villagers it is apparent that there are a number of health problems. There is a high number of leishmaniasis cases on children, visible through the scars on the faces of many young persons. The local name is "saldana". Although this is not a deadly disease, it causes severe problems for those affected. The open wounds can easily be infected. There is a cure for the "saldana", with the use of Glucatamin injections administered by the Hospital in Herat.

As earlier mentioned the villagers report that the number of illnesses has been reduced since the introduction of the handpumps, providing clean drinking water. Women did express concerns over high incidence of common childhood diseases such as diarrhoea, respiratory diseases, and where access to preventive or curative treatment was limited.

There are further reports of malaria and tuberculosis, but no consistent recording of such illnesses. We have not had any reports of recent immunisation campaigns in the village.

### **HEALTH FACILITIES**

There is no health post or doctor in the village, the place that people go for medical treatment is Herat. There are at least two educated nurses in the village, and two persons who are currently undertaking medical education. There is no pharmacy or medicine store in the village.

There are a few traditional midwives, socalled "Daia's", in the village, but none has undergone Traditional Birth Attendant training.

According to the *shura*, the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) is working for the establishment of a health post in one of the neighbouring villages. The allocation of land for the post is yet to be settled, but the *shura* has proposed to give land free of cost.

### **PROBLEMS WITH LANDMINES AND UXOs**

The villagers have had a major problems with landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) during the last 20 years. Large parts of the area around the village was mined by both parties to the conflict, the mujahedin using anti tank mines and the Afghan Government using anti personnel mines. In addition came a number of UXOs from the ongoing fighting between these groups. The mines caused the villagers to abandon much of their agricultural and grazing land. A large scale demining operation started in 1992, and all known occurrences of landmines and UXOs are cleared by early 1999. Landmines and UXOs has caused numerous accidents for the villagers with loss of lives and limbs. The demining operation is seen to have had a huge positive impact.

A large share of the population still express a lack of thrust in cleared areas, referring to the finding of a mine this year in area believed to have been cleared, and to a similar incident two years back. In some areas people use oxen rather than tractors in cultivating the land due to a fear of landmines. There is also uncertainty about the safety of the road going through Jibrail to Herat city. In general, the fear of possible mines continue to restrict the movement of villagers, even after the completion a major demining operation.

### **HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

UNICEF: latrines and wells with handpumps (47 wells).

DACAAR: wells with handpumps

NPO/RRAA: income generation project

WFP: distribution of food for flood victims

UNHCR/WFP: distribution of shovels and tools for flood victims

Afghan Red Crescent Society: assistance to flood victims

AREA: income generation and energy saving projects

MCPA: survey and marking of minefields

OMAR: demining and mine awareness

MDC: demining

AMAA: community based mine awareness (ongoing)

### **ONGOING PROJECTS**

At the moment there are two NGOs working in the village, AREA and AMAA. Both work closely with the *shura*.

AREA started their work in 1997 and is now supporting a micro credit project currently which aims at reaching 64 beneficiaries (male and female) within one year. AREA has also introduced solar cookers in the village, the first batch was delivered in mid-April 1999. AREA has prepared project proposals for flood protection and for two deep wells with diesel pumps for agricultural irrigation. AREA has encouraged the expansion of the *shura*.

AMAA's community based mine awareness program started in the village in early March, and two mine awareness teachers has been operating in the village until the end of April. Two Community Local Teachers (CLTs) are appointed by AMAA. They have worked closely with the AMAA team, and will continue mine awareness education for one year, with supervision and salaries provided by AMAA.

### **MAIN ECONOMIC ADAPTATIONS IN THE VILLAGE**

From the interviews with the *shura* and with villagers it is apparent that the most important income of the village inhabitants is from agricultural production. The most important crops grown is wheat and cumin, complemented by barley, melons, beans, and other vegetables. There is number of cattle. In Qala-e Zuria the inhabitants specialise in holding sheep and goats, most of them being from traditionally semi-nomadic families. Their economic adaptation is based on a mix of cash and kind income for the milk products the wool of sheep. Milk products are both consumed in

the household and sold in neighbouring mahallas while the wool is used for carpet production.

There are a number of occupations that are possible to pursue in combination with agricultural work, so the typical household relies on a mix of income sources. A characteristic of poor households is that no income is stable or large enough that the household can rely on one income only. The following are frequent ingredients of a household economy in the village:

- Income from agricultural production, including rent arrangements.
- Skilled persons, such as masons, work both within the village and in the larger area.
- Carpet weaving is performed in the houses, especially by women. The products are sold in the bazaar of Herat city and also at the market at Kandahar gate in the centre of the town.
- Seasonal work on the farmland for unskilled labours.
- Collection of bushes or firewood in the mountains for sale in the city.
- Day-labour and service jobs in Herat city.
- Sale of milk and farm products in Herat city.
- Shopkeeping, mainly groceries, but some specialised.

Many young men go to Iran as manual labour in the construction business. Many go on a seasonal basis, some stay for longer periods. Work in Iran has become less accessible due to stricter restrictions by the Iranian government. Currently it is not possible to enter Iran legally, and there has been an increase in the number of expulsions from Iran. In spite of the difficulties, labour in Iran is still a major income for many households in the village.

## **MAIN RESOURCES**

There are four categories of resources that constitute the main assets of the village, these being:

### ***1. Agricultural Land***

Of the total agricultural land less than 1/3 is presently in use, due to lack of irrigation water. The soil, according to several villagers, is tested to be of outstanding quality and given sufficient irrigation water it could provide a better income and jobs for a large number of villagers. The traditional three year cycle of cultivation leaves 2/3 of the arable land fallow.

### ***2. Labour and Skills***

The village has a large number of men, women and children whose labour power could be used in far more productive ways than what is currently the case. A large share of the labour force have experience from a variety of tasks from Iran, particularly in the construction business. There is great inventiveness among the villagers to get the most out of available resources. This is demonstrated in the collection of bushes and firewood on common land, as well as the women's custom of heating only one tandoor for baking bread for several neighbouring households.

### ***3. Functioning Shura***

The village has an active *shura* which has taken several steps to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants. The *shura* and its leadership also has great support in the community. The *shura* is capable of running negotiations with Afghan authorities, and with the relief community. The current Arbab has in particular been important in developing the contact with NGOs, and he has demonstrated a dynamic approach on a range of difficult issues.

#### ***4. Community Cooperation and Values***

The community recognises the need to work towards common goals. The community commitment is demonstrated in the will to contribute to new projects both through communal work and through financing. Islam also seem to have a strong integrative effect on the local society, and the sense of standing together under difficult economic conditions seems to be strong in spite of 20 years of war and social upheaval.

### **MAIN CONSTRAINTS**

A number of constraints on the utilisation of the resources of the village emerge from the more informal discussions with the villagers, and are key factors in the condition that the villagers describe as economic hardship. During our field work there was an increasing concern for the effects on the village of a massive expulsion of Afghans from Iran, leaving them with less income, but with more persons to house, feed and provide with sensible employment.

#### ***1. Lack of Irrigation Water***

This problem was identified as the main constraint by all villagers, men and women, young and old, poor and rich. The key factor in the economic vulnerability is seen to be the general unreliability of the water supply, the uncertainty in how much water would come from the channel.

#### ***2. Flood***

Over the past 40 years, floods have repeatedly damaged the village and its agricultural land, and forced the villagers to find temporary shelter outside of the village. The last flood, in March 1999, washed away agricultural land and took the life of one woman. Floods annually destroy the channel which has to be rebuilt. The physical damage caused by the flood, as well as the continuous risk of a new flood experienced by villagers, are both factors that severely inhibit local economic improvement.

#### ***3. Low Education Level, Few Highly Skilled Labours***

There is a concern among the villagers about what types of jobs their children would be qualified for, often with reference to the potential to gain a higher income. In general, the education level in the village is rather low. A number of children received education in Iran during their time in refuge there. Important educational work is currently performed at the village school by a handful of committed teachers.

## NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE VILLAGE

The following needs were emphasised in the survey, men and women both emphasise points 1 and 2, whereas the women tends to be concerned also points 3 to 5.

1. Deep wells with diesel pump for irrigation purposes, minimum 2.
2. Flood protection.
3. Drinking water, more easily accessible.
4. Health facilities, especially for children.
5. Education should be improved: more teachers and better teaching material.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on recommendations from the villagers, findings in the village, and the team's previous experience with various NGOs in Afghanistan, we have taken the liberty to make the following suggestions:

### *1) For the Shura*

Maintain and strengthen an active role in the relation with aid agencies, and emphasise those projects that are in line with the priorities of the *shura*.

Ensure that all segments of the village benefit from external assistance, securing an even distribution between different mahallas and ethnic groups. The irrigation project presents the *shura* to a major challenge in having to ensure an even distribution to all users of land within the village.

### *2) For the Government of Afghanistan*

Immunisation campaign. This could be addressed jointly by the MOPH and UNICEF.

Address the leishmaniasis problem. Should be addressed by MOPH. A cure will be helpful for the present cases. Attention should also be drawn to preventive measures, here experiences gained by Healthnet International in Kabul could be of help.

Health clinic. The lack of a health facility in the neighbourhood is a constant problem for the entire area, and we would recommend the MOPH that the process for establishment of the planned health post is speeded up.

Education. The low number of teachers in the school raises a concern about the quality of the future education level of the population. It is a challenge to the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

### *3) For NGOs and UN Agencies*

The villagers and the *shura* express a strong interest to work closely with the aid agencies on a number of issues. The inhabitants have shown both willingness and practical efforts to participate with the agencies in order to get the maximum out of the available resources. We would emphasise that the irrigation project in particular, would be feasible for being able to accommodate a possible high number of returnees from Iran.



Deep wells with diesel pumps for irrigation is priority number one for both *shura* and other respondents. Here we would like to add a cautious comment: A deep well project requires a continuous control with changes in the groundwater table, as sinking levels of ground water could have serious negative effects in the longer term, for example in emptying existing wells for drinking water.

Flood protection is another priority area. Each year, the channels are rebuilt by communal work after havng been destroyed by floods.

Strengthen the education facilities with emphasis on support for schoolbooks and teaching aids.

Offering a TBA training course to women currently practising as daias.

Training of one or two paravets that could be based in the village and care for the household animals. This could be the basis for a more viable income for a larger share of the population.

Training to the disabled in a profession that would allow them to set up a sustainable business in the village. This challenge goes particularly to the organisation involved in the micro-credit scheme, which then further need to incorporate a targeted training component in their project.

Expansion and restoration of the main mosque, Masjid Juhme, to facilitate the religious practice of an increasing population and facilitate the education of a large group of children.

Finally, we want to wish you all good luck and thank of you for the hospitality shown to us and the patience and willingness of all villagers who shared their views and information with us, giving us generously of their time to answer our many inquisitive questions. For many of you the questions have touched on painful memories – our hope is that this small report may be of use to you in your work for the improvement of the villagers livelihood.

Herat 28.04.1999

## Abbreviations and Afghan Terms

ABLE	ARIC Box Library Extension
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACT	Action of Churches Together
ADA	Afghan Development Association
AIA	Afghan Interim Administration
AICF	Action Against Hunger
AMAA	Afghan Mine Awareness Association
AMAC	Assistance to Mine-Affected Communities
ANCB	Afghan NGO's Coordination Bureau
ANGO	Afghan NGO
APB	Afghanistan Programming Board
AREA	Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy-conservation in Afghanistan
ARIC	ACBAR Resource and Information Centre
ASG	Afghan Support Group
BAAG	British Agencies Afghanistan Group
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CB	Coordination Body
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCA	Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (Afghan NGO)
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (Sri Lankan CB)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLONG	Liaison Committee for Development NGOs to the EU
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
CPE	Complex Political Emergency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DANIDA	Danish Agency for Development Assistance
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DHA	Department for Humanitarian Affairs
ECHO	Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission
ECOSOC	(UN) Economic and Social Committee
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator (UN)
EU	European Union
EuronAid	European Association of Non-governmental Organisations for Food and Emergency Aid
FAO	(UN) Food and Agriculture Organisation
GAD	Gender and Development
GAFM	Gender and Forced Migration
GONGO	Governmental NGO

GRO	Grassroots Organisation
HMA	Humanitarian Mine Action
IASC	Inter- Agency Standing Committee
IAM	International Assistance Mission
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines
ICC	Islamic Coordination Council
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Consortium of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Committees
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
INGO	Islamic NGO
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
IRR	Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction Model (WB)
ISRA	Islamic Relief Agency
MAC	Mine Action Centre
MADERA	Mission d'Aide au Developpement des Economies Rurales en Afghanistan
MDM	Médecine de Monde
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NCB	NGOs' Coordination Body
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRC	Norwegian Research Council
NGDO	Northern-based Development Organisations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Development Agency
NPO/RRAA	Norwegian Project Office/Rural Rehabilitation Association of Afghanistan
OCHA	(UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OI	Ockenden International
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PCP	Principled Common Programming
PLA	Participatory Learning
PRA	Participatory Rapid/Rural Assessment
PRDU	Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit
RAWA	Revolutionary Association for Afghan Women
RCB	Regional Coordination Body
RNN	Relief and Rehabilitation Network
SC	(UN) Security Council
SCF	Save the Children
SF	Strategic Framework

SPHERE	Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
SWABAC	South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association for Coordination
UN	United Nations
UNCO	United Nations Coordinator's Office
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOCA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes in Afghanistan
UNOCHA	United Nations Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Centre
UNSMA	United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan
USCR	US Committee for Refugees
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VOICE	Voluntary Organisation in Cooperation and Emergency
WAMY	The World Association of Muslim Youth
WB	The World Bank
WID	Women in Development
WIDF	Women in Forced Migration
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
Al-Qaida	The Base
<i>Arbab</i>	Village representative
<i>Hijhra</i>	Religiously justified flight
<i>Jihad</i>	Holy war
<i>Jirga</i>	Council
<i>Loya Jirga</i>	Grand Council (at national level)
<i>Maharam</i>	Term to describe men that women are allowed to interrelate with, i.e. within the closest family
<i>Moasesi</i>	Relief organisation (used both for NGOs and UN agencies)
<i>Muhajerin</i>	Refugee
<i>Mujahideen</i>	Holy warrior
<i>Mullah/Maulawi</i>	Islamic clergy
<i>Sadaqat</i>	Islamic voluntary tax
<i>Shura</i>	Council
<i>Taliban</i>	Religious student
<i>Waqf</i>	Islamic institutions administering charity
<i>Zakat</i>	Islamic compulsory tax

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