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Afghanistan Outlook

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Note

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Editorial

The aid community in Afghanistan has been addressing the consequences of war and displacement for fifteen years, yet the context of assistance and its impact are still not fully understood. The Office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, UNSMA and the World Bank have begun this series of analytical reports in order to enhance the assistance community's collective understanding of the context of the Afghan crisis. Although it is not an official document of the United Nations, it attempts to offer an analysis of the present situation in the country at a given point in time.

Afghan civil society

While the continuing civil war is a determining factor of Afghan society, it involves perhaps no more than 50,000 fighters, who are basically localised along the conflict's fault lines. Much of the country enjoys comparative peace and security, particularly in the rural areas. The United Nations peace process focuses on the warlords and their political representatives. Assistance agencies address the needs of the most vulnerable. Yet we know little about everything in between, which constitutes the majority of the society. Without understanding the functioning of civil society, we cannot identify the forces that have a vested interest in advancing peace. In short, we need to know what makes communities tick.

In this first issue, we have tried to put together a snapshot of the economy as well as updates on the political and humanitarian situation. A special focus

section deals with the plight of the disabled.

In a prolonged conflict such as that in Afghanistan, various groups and individuals adopt different coping mechanisms. Many Afghans who have had the option to leave have done so, either permanently or temporarily as refugees or migrant labourers in other countries. Among those who remain, there are a few "winners" and a majority of "survivors." The plight of the "losers" is likely to remain particularly acute. These are the war affected, the displaced, and specifically, the under- and unemployed in urban centres, as well as those who disagree with the policies imposed by the authorities.

Almost all institutions of governance and organised production are destroyed. Salaries of civil servants have not been paid for many months. Aid agencies partly compensate for the collapse of the government sector: for example, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is paying the salaries of several thousand teachers; hospitals function thanks to the injection of cash by ICRC; the UN Mine Action Programme provides stable employment to close to 5,000 Afghans. Remittances alleviate the suffering of many urban dwellers, and several hundred thousand persons in Kabul alone benefit from some form of international assistance. But the condition of the most vulnerable--widows, female-headed households, the disabled, street children--who have no such safety net is worsening.

In this and subsequent reports, we shall attempt to shed some light on the key factors that affect the livelihoods of Afghans.

Trade, taxation and migration

The functioning of the Afghan economy deserves much more careful scrutiny. We have anecdotal evidence that the Taliban have re-introduced taxation on agricultural production after a hiatus of two decades, which saw intermittent pillage of agricultural surplus by the commanders. This is reported to have led to poppy cultivation in new areas, as farmers require cash to pay taxes and to avoid conscription. In addition, pressure on land may increase because of refugee return (particularly from Iran), the resumption of internal migration and in particular the reclaiming of land by returnee landlords, for example in Hazarajat. Conflict coupled with asset depletion for landless farmers may trigger increased internal migration to urban centres and economic migration to neighbouring countries.

At present the peace process is stalled and the factions seem to be entering another fighting season. Any escalation

of the conflict will have negative effects on the timid signs of economic recovery that are apparent. The section on the Afghan economy below shows that while pockets of depression and food insecurity persist (Hazarajat, Badakhshan, urban centres, in particular Kabul), the economy has registered some positive trends. For example, in 1998 agriculture has done well overall, and trade is on the upswing, partly because of the economic sanctions against Pakistan. Transit trade from Dubai and Turkmenistan to Pakistan has increased. Admittedly, except for transporters and intermediaries, very little of the benefits remain in Afghanistan. It can be assumed, however, that stability in Taliban-controlled areas (which include all major border-crossing points) will cause trade and economic activity to expand. This growth might in turn strengthen the social base of the Taliban.

We hope that this biannual report will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced by aid assistance actors. We also hope that it will interest a wider audience. We welcome the comments of our readers as well as suggestions for the next issue.

Outlook for 1999

The Ashkabad talks gave hope for a peaceful settlement.

Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi visited the region in February and March, travelling to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. After his meetings with Afghans and outside parties, in February and March of 1999 both sides met in face-to-face talks in Ashkabad. The first session took place on 10 and 11 February, and was followed by the second round from 11 to 14 March. At the end of the second series, both sides agreed in principle to form a shared executive, legislature and judiciary and to hold a follow-up meeting as early as April 1999.

Subsequently, both sides retreated from their positions. In spring 1999, the United Nations is resuming talks with both sides, as well with as other countries, to try to reach an agreement that might help contain the current level of fighting and might hopefully draw the two sides back to peaceful discussion.

However, with the advent of spring, the fighting is increasing.

Both the Taliban and Ahmad Shah Massood appear to believe in a military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan rather than a negotiated settlement. Both sides are believed to have received significant re-supply of war materiel throughout the winter, and fresh recruitment has taken place. Peace initiatives by neutral Afghans have been rejected by the Taliban, who repeatedly

refuse any discussion or sharing of power with the "corrupted former leaders," claiming that they have already laid the foundation of a broad based multi-ethnic government.

The former Northern Alliance, reduced to Massood, will strengthen its position.

Ahmad Shah Massood is now the only significant military opponent to the Taliban. He controls about 20% of the country. He has been able to secure his lines of communication and receives strong military and financial support from abroad. After a series of meetings in December, January, and February, Massood has emerged as leader of an allied opposition Supreme Military Council. He therefore will be able to better prepare and co-ordinate offensives against the Taliban. His resistance and recent successes against the Taliban have boosted the morale of his forces.

The Taliban will have difficulties controlling their newly occupied territories.

Now in control of a much larger area in non-Pushtun regions, the Taliban's long and tenuous lines of communication are stretched. This will allow the opposition to select their targets and to strike, using well-tested guerrilla tactics and better knowledge of the terrain. The fighting could be very costly for the Taliban in equipment and men. Its continuation is likely to be increasingly unpopular among the Pushtun fighters and is likely to antagonise the local population. In

early 1999, sporadic fighting occurred in Jowzjan, Faryab and Bamyan Provinces. With the advent of spring in April, intensified fighting erupted in Hazarajat, while skirmishes took place in Baghlan and Kunduz Provinces.

Neighbours will talk in support of peace in Afghanistan, but will they act?

Afghanistan's neighbours have increasingly experienced the "spill over" effect of the fighting and instability in Afghanistan. The murder of Iranian diplomats heightened tension within Iran and Afghanistan. Central Asian Republics (and especially Uzbekistan) have been very concerned by the possible spread of radical Islam in their territories. Pakistan, accused of supporting the Taliban, has found itself beleaguered internationally. Many members of Pakistan's ruling elite are increasingly worried about the involvement of Pakistani Taliban in Afghanistan and about the consequences of their return home. Ostensibly, all neighbouring countries have reasons to promote peace in Afghanistan. Unfortunately they do not yet have a common agenda to resolve the Afghan problem. The Six plus Two meeting planned in Tashkent could offer the opportunity to reach, after years of reluctance, a mutual agreement on the Afghan issue.

The Political Panorama in the Last Quarter of 1998

Taliban territorial gains...

In the first half of 1998, the military situation remained largely unchanged. Following a well-planned offensive in the northwest in July, the Taliban captured Shiberghan (stronghold of General Dostum), then Mazar-i-Sharif (on 8 August) and the central region of Bamyan (headquarters of the Hezb-i-Wahdat) on 12 September. This advance gave the Taliban control of 80% of the country. The northeast under Ahmad Shah Massood remained the only significant part of Afghanistan not under Taliban control.

...lead to the disintegration of Northern Alliance.

The successful Taliban offensive led to the collapse of the Northern Alliance. Most of its leaders lost their area of control and were forced to seek refuge abroad (e.g. Dostum, Malik, Hekmatyar, Khalili and even President Rabbani). Many fighters, notably the Hezb-Islami troops, defected to the Taliban including leaders like Akbari. Even in the Northern and Central Regions where the Taliban could not hope for popular support, Northern Alliance leaders were unable to organise strong resistance among the local population. The fall of Mazar-i-Sharif followed by the central bastion of Hazarajat was largely unexpected, and showed that ethnic or religious differences could not prevent the Taliban from increasing their control of Afghanistan.

Ahmad Shah Massoud is the only real military opponent to the Taliban.

The only leader able to resist and counter-attack has been Massoud. He first reinforced his position in Badakhshan by fighting against defections. He next secured his lines of communication by retaking Taloqan and putting pressure on the Taliban near Imam Sahib and Khanabad, thereby threatening Kunduz. On several occasions Massoud's troops outmanoeuvred the Taliban (in Andarab valley, Nejrab and Tagab, Narhin), showing that well trained fighters under a unified command could inflict heavy losses on the Taliban and challenge their reputation of invincibility. Fighting continued sporadically up to the end of the year with small pockets of resistance in Northern Region (Darzab). Short truces at the beginning of Ramadan in December allowed some exchanges of prisoners between the Taliban and Massoud. ICRC organised most of them, and an influential Afghan living in Saudi Arabia also obtained some releases. Nevertheless, these exchanges did not lead to any substantive talks between the two sides.

Human rights concerns...

The conquest of northern and central Afghanistan by the Taliban has been accompanied by serious violations of human rights especially during the first days following the take over of Mazar-i-Sharif (8 August 1998). These violations, according to various reports, were targeted mainly at the Hazara community, and indiscriminate killings and deportation to unknown places were reported^[P1]. In addition, nine Iranians

(eight diplomats and one journalist) were killed in the Iranian consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif. More allegations of human rights violations were reported during the capture of the Kayan valley (the stronghold of Afghan Ismailis) and Bamyan, but no independent confirmation has been obtained. It must be mentioned that in May and October 1997, serious violations of human rights had already been reported in the northern region when a large number of Taliban fighters were killed after the abortive Taliban take-over of Mazar.

...have lead to the involvement of Iran, Central Asian Republics and Pakistan...

The killing of the Iranian diplomats increased tension, already quite high, at the border between Iran and Afghanistan. Some media reports even indicated that Iran was contemplating some manner of military response in retaliation. Iran's armed forces organised large-scale military manoeuvres along the border involving approximately 200,000 troops. This tension spread among other neighbours of Afghanistan: Uzbekistan is concerned about the presence of the Taliban's fundamentalist brand of Islam so close of its territory, and Pakistan is accused by Iran of backing the Taliban.

...and the intervention of the international community...

The international community strongly condemned the killings. The UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council both issued condemnations. The special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan sought the comments and

observations of the Taliban concerning these allegations. The Taliban responded that it was a one-sided accusation. After adopting several points of common understanding at a foreign minister level meeting, the Six Plus Two Group supported the UN Secretary General's proposal for a visit to the region by his Special Envoy, Mr. Brahimi. Arriving in October, he visited the UAE, Iran (twice), Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian neighbours of Afghanistan. He went to Afghanistan on an "exceptional basis," UN personnel being re-located out of the country after the cruise missile strikes which were followed by the attack in August 1998 of two UNSMA officers resulting in the death of one (a military adviser). In Kandahar, he met Mullah Omar following several earlier meetings with Taliban representatives in Islamabad. This visit resulted in a gradual decrease in the tension between Iran and Afghanistan, and the release of twenty-seven Iranian truck drivers who were taken into custody by the Taliban after the take-over of Mazar. Gradually, as relations between Iran and Afghanistan normalised, a medium level Iranian delegation visited Afghanistan and secured the release of Iranian trucks held by the Taliban.

The Special Envoy returned to Islamabad in December for a short visit. He focused on follow up on the agenda of his previous visit (particularly concerning

relations between Iran and Afghanistan and inter-Afghan talks). He also had conversations concerning the security of UN personnel and the investigations into the murder of UN personnel in Kabul and Jalalabad. Following his recommendation, the Secretary General in his report on Afghanistan to the General Assembly stated that UNSMA would add a Civilian Affairs Unit.

.... expressing also its deep concern about terrorism and drug issues.

The US missile strike on Afghanistan in August 1998 showed clearly the deep concern that some members of the international community had about the presence of Islamic militants in Afghanistan, some of whom are allegedly involved in international terrorism. In reaction, the Taliban leadership presented Osama Ben Laden as a guest of Afghanistan who has agreed not to carry out any violent actions outside of the country. This stance has not fully reassured the international community. Concerning the drug issue, Afghanistan is one of the world's main producers of opium and has increased its capacity for refining the raw product. The international community has expressed its concern on this matter and its expectation of better collaboration between UNDCP and the Taliban authorities in order to control and reduce the production of opium.

Human Rights in Afghanistan

The human rights situation in Afghanistan continues to generate a great deal of concern. However, little is known about the specific and divergent concerns of different socio-economic and other groups throughout the country. For the most part, the human rights situation is narrowly defined. Human rights reports, for example, do not take into account the [P2] coping mechanisms of different communities and what can be done to support their efforts to safeguard their rights. Reports on the situation of rights in Afghanistan tend to ignore economic, social and cultural rights and what needs to be done to safeguard and enhance the enjoyment of such rights.

Victims of human rights violations are found in all sections of Afghan society. Minorities, including women and children, are most severely affected. Human rights violations are closely linked to the continuing conflict, the emergence of an informal economy, the erosion of local institutions of governance, and the collapse of education.

The newly appointed Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Afghanistan, Mr. Kamal Hossain, in his first report called attention to a host of factors that contribute to the denial and violation of human rights. He made specific reference to the accumulative and disastrous impact of years of war on the human rights of Afghans both inside and outside the country. He highlighted the role of external actors in the conflict including, in particular, their role in

maintaining an "unceasing flow of arms to all sides." He said that the ready availability of weapons has contributed "to the persistence of human rights abuses by subjecting men, women and children to the arbitrary rule of those who use those arms and by making people virtual hostages in their own land."

Mr. Hossain also referred to the "deteriorating humanitarian situation," which he said was affected by the absence of international personnel of the United Nations agencies "as well as others engaged in humanitarian work." He stressed that "it was imperative to maintain and enhance humanitarian assistance not only to meet basic human needs" but also to uphold "the right to life of millions of suffering Afghans" and to foster an environment conducive to ending restrictions which violate human rights.

The policies of the authorities continue to generate concern particularly in relation to the status of women and girls and other vulnerable groups[P3]. Coupled with widespread devastation, extreme poverty, and the flight of trained personnel, access to education and adequate health care is still extremely limited[P4].

With the onset of spring and renewed fighting, non-combatants will continue to be endangered[P5]. Their human rights situation is likely to suffer if their right to be civilians is not respected and if humanitarian assistance is restricted or unavailable because of declining

resources[P6].

In April 1999, the Department of Political Affairs fielded an assessment mission to review the terms of reference and potential deployment of twelve civilian officers. The Office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights will field an investigative mission to determine the facts surrounding alleged massacres in the Mazar area in 1997 and 1998[P7].

The State of the Afghan Economy

General overview

- *The extent of destruction:* Afghanistan's economy has seen widespread destruction over the past two decades of war. Most of the major formal social, administrative and economic institutions of the country have fallen apart due to the Soviet occupation, population displacement, and continued heavy fighting among various mujahidden factions in 1992. The nation's transportation and communication systems, heavy and small-scale industries, education and agricultural infrastructure are among the most seriously damaged sectors that need a tremendous amount of investment when peace and stability return to the country. At present, it would be difficult to expect significant improvement in the economic situation of the country.
- *Deterioration of the situation:* This economic decline has exacerbated the level of poverty and economic hardship throughout the country. Largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, the country has witnessed diminishing income levels, declining food security, reduced access to urgently needed services and an increasing population.
- *Regional disparities:* A wide range of disparities exists between different regions and within each region. While Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar have largely benefited from cross-border trading with neighbouring countries, the northern provinces, in particular the isolated and chronic food deficit provinces of Badakhshan and Bamyan, have been badly affected by natural disasters and heavy fighting that took place in August and September 1998. The Taliban authorities reportedly blockade the provinces of Parwan and Kapisa, which has caused a tremendous increase in prices of essential items.
- *The changing state of the economy:* Previously, the Government of Afghanistan controlled the economy and major investments were made in the public sector. The private sector was active in agriculture and trade activities. During the course of the past two decades, the reduced role of the central government has encouraged the private sector to play a prime role in the nation's traditional economic activities. The potential for further improvement of the private sector is still high and a large number of Afghan businessmen and traders might be interested in investing in small-scale industries provided that security and stability exist. However, this depends on the decision of the future governments of the country and the economic policy they may chalk out.
- *Vulnerability to outside forces:* The Afghan economy has always remained vulnerable to policy decisions adopted by its neighbouring countries. In the past, even when peace and stability were in place, the country's economy depended on economic relations with the former USSR. In recent years, the country has become vulnerable to

policy decisions made in Pakistan. An obvious example of such a change can be seen in the markets: an increase in prices of essential commodities in Pakistan led to further increase in prices in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar. (See table 2 and figure 2 below.) Also, the unofficial devaluation of the Pakistani currency during 1998 further reduced the value of the Afghan currency.

- *Establishment of a central authority:* The Taliban movement has established a nominal government in most parts of the country, which is not yet recognised by the international community except Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE. At present, no reliable information is available on economic indicators such as national income, the government budget, foreign trade, inflation rate, income distribution, employment, current level of GDP, GNP, or balance of payments.

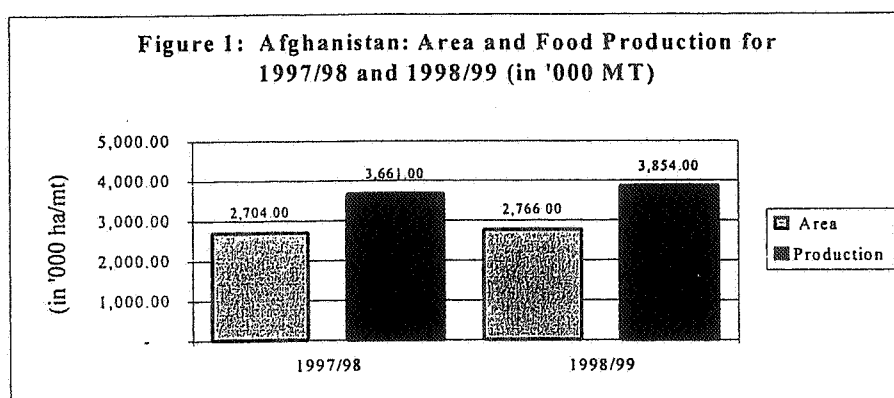
The current status of the economy

Despite continued destruction, blockades of some of the supply routes and fighting in various parts of the country, trade and agriculture remained active. The section below provides a more elaborate study of

agriculture and trade activities and their role in sustaining the Afghan economy.

Agriculture

Increase in cereal production: Agriculture forms the largest sector of the economy and the source of livelihood for over 85% of the population. With the return of security to most parts of the country, following the Taliban's control over 75-80 percent of the territory, agricultural production has increased over the past few years. The Crop and Food Supply Assessment carried out by a FAO/WFP mission in 1997 and in May 1998 estimated the last two years' cereal production to be the highest in the past several years. The total 1998 cereal production was estimated to be 3.85 million tonnes, which is 5 percent higher than 1997, and perhaps the largest since 1978. The farmers' response to high cereal prices of the year before (US\$ 300 per tonne), favourable precipitation during winter and spring, and enhanced security are cited as the main factors for the increase. In the north, surplus cereal could not be moved to Kabul, Bamyan or Badakhshan provinces where food scarcity and high prices for grain prevailed due to the blockade of the supply routes. This led to a reduction in the price of wheat and other major cereals in the northern provinces.



Food imports/dependency: A large segment of the Afghan population still depends on food imported from abroad or that distributed by the aid community. The total import requirement for the period of June 1998 to July 1999 is estimated by FAO at 740,000 tonnes, of which an estimated 140,000 tonnes of wheat would be food assistance provided by the international community. The bulk of the remaining imported food comes from Pakistan via Torkham in the east and Chaman in the south, as well as through a few small border points in the southeast. Table 1 in Annex 1 shows the yield and production of main crops for 1997/98 and 1998/99.

Increase in livestock production: Livestock forms a main source of the household economy in rural areas. Many families in rural areas sell their livestock to purchase wheat during the spring months when they run out of stocks. While this sector has sustained enormous loss due to prolonged hostilities, there are indications that livestock production has improved over the past few years, especially in areas under the control of the Taliban. Table 2 in Annex 1 shows the estimated number and type of major livestock produced in Afghanistan during 1998.

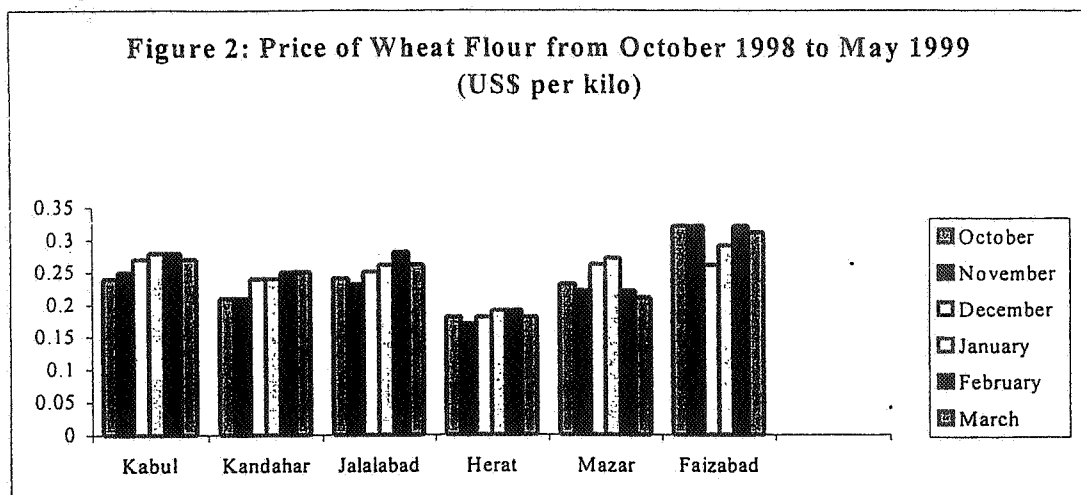
Decrease in poppy yields: While cereal production has increased there seems to be a significant decrease in poppy yields during 1998. According to UNDCP Annual Opium Poppy Survey of 1998, although there was a 9 percent increase in poppy cultivation, UNDCP estimated a 25 percent reduction in poppy yields when compared to 1997. The total opium production for 1998 was estimated at 2,102 tonnes against a total

of 2,804 tonnes in 1997. This reduction in the level of poppy production was reported to be due to unusual climatic conditions such as heavy and continuous rains and hailstorms in some of the major poppy producing provinces.

Food prices/inflation

Over the past six months, Afghanistan has experienced growing inflation, which has been influenced largely by cost-push and demand-pull forces. The Afghani to US\$ rate changed from 36,000 Afs. to a dollar in October 1998 to 45,000 Afs. to a dollar in mid-April 1999, a devaluation of more than 25 percent in six months.

The prices of essential items have also increased in different parts of the country. Table 3 (in Annex 1) provides a list of prices of wheat flour in six provinces for the months of October 1998 through March 1999. Tables 3 and 4 reflect an interesting picture in the Afghan markets, in particular the relationship between income through casual labour and household expenditure. For instance, in Kabul, a family of seven can earn 1.14 US\$ a day if the head of the family is lucky enough to find employment, while they need to spend US\$ 0.63 to buy twenty-one loaves of bread for the family. This implies that over 50 percent of an individual's income is spent only on bread. The isolated food deficit province of Badakhshan is the most expensive place to live. During last winter, WFP distributed over 2,000 tonnes of food in nine districts of Badakhshan and approximately 4,000 tonnes to the most vulnerable populations in Hazarajat.



Labour market

A great majority of the Afghan labour force is self-employed, mostly in agriculture and domestic trade but also, to a smaller extent, in cross-border trade. Working as a casual labourer inside Afghanistan as well as in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran is another major source of employment for many Afghans. While the income from remittances is not known, Table 4 (Annex 1) provides interesting information on income through casual labour. The table reflects a downward pattern in most cities except for Kandahar, where income through casual labour has increased by 15 percent. The worst situation prevails in Faizabad (47 percent decrease) and in Mazar-i-Sharif (43 percent decrease). In Herat and Jalalabad, income through casual labour increased between October and December last year and decreased between January and March 1999. One reason, among others, could be the reduction in demand for casual labour during the winter months. Recruitment in military activities has gone up due to the need by warring factions and lack of employment opportunities. Unemployment has increased in

services, industries and other formal institutions.

Trade

Domestic trade: Despite continued conflict and blockades of supply routes in some parts of the country, domestic trade continues throughout the country. The closure of the Salang Tunnel has created many difficulties for domestic merchants, as they are no longer able to bring the agricultural products of the north to Kabul and to other parts of the country via Kabul. Even in blockaded areas, merchandise continues to move, albeit in smaller quantities and with more difficulties.

Cross-border trade: Cross-border trade in domestic goods and foreign commodities has increased between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkmenistan over the past several years. According to a recent newspaper report, there has been an 11 percent increase in the volume of trade between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan during the last year. In September 1998, the Taliban authorities signed an agreement with the Government of Turkmenistan on the

import of petrol, diesel and jet fuel. The first consignment of the fuel reportedly arrived in mid-December via Torghundi. This has, to some extent, reduced Afghanistan's dependency on fuel imports from Iran. In December, the Taliban Government signed another agreement with Turkmenistan for the import of 600 tonnes of liquefied natural gas.

With souring relations between the Taliban and Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the border points with these countries have been closed and trade activities have come to a halt, which has limited Afghanistan's access to these markets for its exports and imports. However, the Torghundi border in Herat has remained open as the Taliban managed to establish a cordial relation with Turkmenistan. In the past, Afghan traders used to import goods through Bander-Abbas and Islam Qala, while now they have switched to Bander-Abbas-Turkmenistan and Torghundi, which has increased their transportation costs.

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan benefit from cross-border trade, despite their claim to have been affected by the existing trading mechanism--i.e. the Afghan Transit Trade. Under the agreement of the Afghan Transit Trade, Pakistan allows Afghanistan to have access to the sea and to undertake trade and commerce with the international community to the extent required by Afghanistan's economy and commerce requirements. Most of the goods imported under the ATT are reportedly electronics and other consumer items, which cross Pakistan's territory duty free. Some of these are then re-exported

illegally through smuggling back into Pakistan. On several occasions, the Government of Pakistan has tried to limit the amount of goods imported under the ATT by dropping some thirty items from the ATT list. In 1995, for instance, the Government of Pakistan made a unilateral decision and took seventeen items including artificial silk fibre and clothing off the list of the ATT. During an interview on 2 January 1999, Pakistan's Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the government had requested the Afghan authorities to review their transit trade and agree either to pay duties equal to those in Pakistan or reduce the quantity of commodities to be imported (*The Frontier Post*, 3 January, 1999). The Taliban authorities have not replied to this request.

Despite these efforts by the Government of Pakistan, there are indications that the volume of re-exports from Afghanistan to Pakistan has increased during the last fiscal year. After the ban on the ATT, most of these items are imported via Gulf countries to the Afghan cities of Kandahar and Jalalabad and then re-exported into Peshawar and Quetta in Pakistan. A recent newspaper report indicates that India-made "Modi" tires are smuggled into Pakistan through Afghanistan via Central Asia and the Russian ports of Vladivostok and Odessa since the import of tires under the ATT was banned 1994 (Inter Press Service 20/4/99).

According to a report published by *The News* (30 December 1998), it was estimated that goods worth Rs. 23 billion (US\$ 500 million) have been imported under the ATT during the current fiscal year while the same imports for the

previous fiscal year amounted to RS 10 billion (approximately US\$ 218 million). According to another report, between July and December 1998, the total trade has increased by around US\$ 43 million over the same period in 1997 (Inter Press Service 20/4/99). According to a World Bank report, the total trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan was estimated to be US\$ 2.5 billion in 1996/97, of which US\$ 1.96 billion was estimated to be the value of re-exported goods from Afghanistan into Pakistan.

These examples indicate that banning the Afghan Transit Trade facility alone does not help reduce smuggling activities in Pakistan and may have negative repercussions for Pakistan in the longer term. Once Afghanistan manages to have

access to other neighbouring markets, they may retaliate against Pakistan's unilateral decision and strengthen their trade relations with other countries where they may have a comparative advantage.

Realising the benefit from trade, and upon requests from the business community in NWFP, the Government of Pakistan issued Statute Regulatory Order (SRO) No. 138 on 3 March 1999, which allows the export of all commodities produced or manufactured in Pakistan, excluding those produced by manufacturing bond, via land routes to Afghanistan against Pakistani rupees. These exports will not be entitled to any duty drawback or zero rating of sales tax (*The Frontier Post*, 17 March 1999).

ANNEX 1

Table 1. Afghanistan: Area, Yield and Production of Main Crops: 1997/98 and 1998/99

Type of cereal	1997/98			1998/99			% Change in production
	Area ('000 ha)	Yield (MT/ha)	Production ('000 MT)	Area ('000 ha)	Yield (MT/ha)	Production ('000 MT)	
Irrigated wheat	1,224	1.7	2,080	1,234	1.6	2,020	(2.9)
Rainfed wheat	900	0.7	631	952	0.9	814	29
Rice (paddy)	180	2.2	400	180	2.5	450	13
Maize	200	1.5	300	200	1.6	330	10
Barley (for grain)	200	1.3	250	200	1.2	240	(4)
Total	2,704	1.4	3,661	2,766	1.4	3,854	5.3

Source: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment – July 1998.

Table 2. Afghanistan: Livestock Production

Type of animal	Headcount survey	Estimated figure for Afghanistan
Cattle	1,694,024	4,555,311
Sheep	9,421,582	25,185,343
Goat	3,561,660	9,449,364
Horse	51,566	153,032
Donkey	417,183	1,122,526
Camel	147,879	463,675
Poultry	3,938,189	10,673,907
Total	19,232,083	51,603,158

Source: FAO – Livestock.

N.B. Data collected from 7,625 villages of 19 provinces and estimated country data for 1998

Table 3. Price of Wheat Flour October 1998 to March 1999 (in US\$ per kilo)

Province	October	November	December	January	February	March	% Change October-March
Kabul	0.24	0.25	0.27	0.28	0.28	0.27	13
Kandahar	0.21	0.21	0.24	0.24	0.25	0.25	19
Jalalabad	0.24	0.23	0.25	0.26	0.27	0.26	8
Herat	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.19	0.19	0.18	0
Mazar	0.23	0.22	0.26	0.27	0.22	0.21	(9)
Faizabad	0.32	0.32	0.26	0.29	0.32	0.31	(3)

Source: WFP survey of food prices.

Table 4. Daily Wages of Casual Labour from October through December 1998 (in US dollars)

Province	October	November	December	January	February	March	% Change October-March
Kabul	1.38	1.30	1.19	1.21	1.11	1.14	(17)
Kandahar	1.40	1.34	1.69	1.71	1.59	1.61	15
Jalalabad	1.27	1.44	1.50	1.31	1.22	1.25	(2)
Herat	1.32	1.34	1.20	1.24	1.12	1.12	(15)
Mazar	1.76	1.53	1.34	1.00	1.00	1.00	(43)
Faizabad	3.00	2.16	1.81	1.79	1.63	1.59	(47)

Source: WFP survey of food prices.

The Humanitarian Situation

Afghanistan's enduring civil conflict has caused widespread loss of human life, violations of human rights, destruction of social and economic infrastructure, environmental degradation, food insecurity and malnutrition, high levels of unemployment and poverty, an almost total absence of social services, internal displacement, a diaspora of educated Afghans, and an increase in illicit drug production. In many parts of the country, particularly in the urban areas, girls are prohibited from attending schools and women are largely prevented from working outside their homes. These restrictions further aggravate the living conditions of the most vulnerable population such as widows and female-headed households.

February brought disaster to the provinces of Wardak and Logar in the form of the third serious earthquake to hit the country within one year. Measuring between 5.5 to 5.9 on the Richter scale, the February 11 earthquake resulted in approximately 70 casualties, a relatively low number given the magnitude since a tremor preceding the quake alerted residents, who fled from their homes. However, damage to livestock and buildings was substantial. Although UN staff were on evacuation status, a small number of UN international staff went to the area on an exceptional basis to help co-ordinate the relief effort. In total, 18,000 families received relief items, and the most vulnerable benefited from 200 tons of food. In addition, health facilities in the area were supported to help them cope with the consequences of the disaster.

When the blockade ended with the take-over by the Taliban in autumn 1998, Hazarajat witnessed some economic improvement before the onset of winter. The subsequent increase in trade and lower food prices slightly enhanced the ability of local communities to sustain themselves during the long winter. However, due to the long economic deterioration of the area, in 1998 the United Nations found that even the end of the blockade would not alleviate hunger among the most vulnerable households. In December 1998-January 1999, WFP embarked on a rapid emergency food aid programme, which succeeded in delivering over 4,000 tons of wheat and high energy biscuits to more than 150,000 of the most vulnerable, mainly the landless and women-headed households.

In addition to the hardship directly caused by conflict and disaster, Afghanistan remained a food deficit country in 1998/1999 with a cereal shortage of 740,000 tons. A combination of scarcity, high transport prices and continual currency depreciation translates into high prices for basic commodities, which are out of reach of the poorest among the population, especially in winter. Lack of food during the spring and the escalation of fighting as the weather improves have exacerbated the vulnerability of many communities, particularly in urban and food deficit areas. In addition, in spring 1999, the Government of Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan, which caused prices of essential commodities to increase in the urban centres.

Moreover, few urban families can rely on a steady income from trade, services or casual labour. Many families are reduced to selling their remaining assets or are engaged in begging and child labour to survive.

However, the relative increase in agricultural production in 1998 meant that some communities in rural areas were able to provide minimum food requirements. Despite the year's increase in cereal production, the ability of rural communities to produce food is in general hampered by shortages of essential inputs (seeds, fertiliser, credit, labour), damage to rural infrastructure including irrigation systems and roads, and landmines. Several of the northern districts of Kabul, which constitute a source of agricultural production for the city, have been depopulated due to continued fighting. For those farmers who remained in this area, access to traditional markets has been limited by a continued unwillingness by both sides to allow access to commercial or humanitarian traffic through the frontlines.

Limited fighting occurred over the winter, mainly in the north and around Kabul, which spread as the weather improved in spring 1999. This has caused heavy civilian casualties, significant internal displacement and extensive property destruction. The resumption of fighting in 1999 may pose a risk to food security due to displacement and insecurity or closure of transit routes.

In the capital, the humanitarian situation remained poor. One factor that increased the hardship of the city's

residents was the departure of most international NGOs in July. This move followed an order by the Taliban authorities that international NGOs relocate to the dilapidated Polytechnic Institute. In August, the escalation of civil conflict and the subsequent missile attacks by the United States led to the evacuation of UN international staff from Afghanistan after the killing of a UN international staff member in Kabul. However, many UN assistance programs were able to continue under the supervision of national staff.

In areas throughout Afghanistan, vulnerable families have benefited from humanitarian and relief programmes implemented by aid agencies, in particular WFP's subsidised bakeries in Kabul and Jalalabad and emergency food distributions in the chronic food deficit areas of Badakhshan and Hazarajat. In Kabul, the combined programmes of WFP, ICRC, and CARE have met the bulk of immediate humanitarian needs, with important contributions from other agencies. WFP bakeries feed some 264,000 people in Kabul year round. ICRC, CARE, UNCHS, supported by a number of national NGOs, have been involved in a joint relief programme aimed at providing non-food items to more than 50,000 people identified as those at greatest risk. In late 1998/early 1999, WFP operated two important emergency food aid programs. In Hazarajat, WFP provided 4,000 tons of food to some 160,000 destitute people, while food was also provided to 51,000 people in ten districts of Badakhshan. WFP also resumed the Jalalabad bakery project in January 1999. The project, which benefits some 150,000 residents of the city, was suspended in the fall due

to pipeline constraints and was resumed on a humanitarian basis for the pre-harvest period up to the end of May 1999.

WHO, UNICEF and others have been supporting health activities in different regions. The situation in the health sector remains a cause for concern. Although more basic health clinics exist now than before the war, there are continued reports of shortages of supplies in the public facilities. While the exclusion of women from medical treatment in Kabul was resolved by allowing women access to medical facilities, the fact remains that most people are unable to afford the cost of privately prescribed drugs or treatment. In the northern region, as a direct consequence of last summer's fighting, the public health system virtually collapsed, with most facilities reported to be overwhelmed. Moreover, very little quality obstetric care and virtually no family planning service exist.

A severe illness struck the remote district of Darwaz in northern Afghanistan in February. The so-called "mystery disease" affected more than 2,000 people, killing 200, mainly the young and the elderly. WHO investigations revealed that the disease was a virulent strain of influenza and responded with medical assistance.

The voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees has been one of the major priorities for the UN agencies and NGOs working in Afghanistan. A total of 107,500 Afghan refugees repatriated during 1998 from Iran and Pakistan. This was the largest repatriation in the world last year, bringing the total number of

refugees who have returned to 4.1 million. An unprecedented funding crisis badly undermined the repatriation scheme, which led to the suspension of all organised group repatriations in late 1998, and affected some rehabilitation projects for groups that had repatriated earlier in the year. However, in 1999 repatriation began again with the gradual return of families from Karachi, Baluchistan and Peshawar. Despite the repatriation of some groups, a limited number of refugees from Hazarajat began arriving in Peshawar and Quetta in January 1999. UNHCR and Shuhada NGO provided one-time assistance.

Beginning in late 1998 and continuing into 1999, over 10,000 refugees were reportedly forced by the authorities in Iran to return to Afghanistan. A UN mission visited Iran in early January. The mission requested that the government of Iran go slow on refugee return until reintegration and rehabilitation activities could be put into place in Afghanistan. However, in spring forced repatriation from Iran was continuing into the provinces of Herat and Nimroz in southwestern Afghanistan.

The year 1999 marks the tenth anniversary of the UN's Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA). In collaboration with several NGOs, MAPA oversees mine action operations throughout most of the country. Afghanistan has one of the highest concentrations of mines anywhere in the world. Most mined areas are agricultural fields, irrigation canals, grazing pasture, roads, and residential and commercial areas. Through 1998, MAPA provided mine awareness training to over four

million people, cleared 330 square kilometres, and destroyed 180,000 mines and 730,000 UXOs. Despite this achievement, there are still 700 square kilometres of land contaminated by landmines. Of these, over 300 square kilometres are high priority areas that need immediate clearance operations. The presence of mines and unexploded bombs affects the delivery of humanitarian aid and hinders the process of urban and rural rehabilitation and development. In Kabul, for example, parts of the city are still heavily mined. This prevents people from rebuilding houses, impedes reconstruction of pipes and wells, buildings, manufacturing plants, and other infrastructure.

Collaborative efforts continue within the assistance community to implement principled common programming of aid activities in Afghanistan. On 10 November 1998, the first meeting of the Afghanistan Programming Body (APB) was held in Islamabad, comprised of representatives from the United Nations, non-governmental organisations,

ICRC/IFRC, and major donor countries. The APB serves as a consensus-building body for the three groups of stakeholders in the assistance community. In 1999, common programming moved forward through the PEACE initiative and the Hazarajat programming group. In addition, the UN is exploring the possibility of a common initiative in Helmand Province aimed at opium reduction. However, in early 1999 the common programming initiative is being hampered by lack of international staff in all regions due to the rotational posting of staff for security reasons.

The 1999 Appeal for Afghanistan was launched in December 1998 seeking US\$ 113 million for priority activities out of a total portfolio of US\$ 185 million of project proposals from UN agencies and NGOs. As of mid-April, only USD 17 million had been contributed in total, of which US\$ 13 million was given against the Appeal. All thematic sectors of the Appeal have been hard hit by this funding crisis.

Disability in Afghanistan

Introduction

The classic image of disability in Afghanistan is of a mine victim with a leg missing. The physical and psychological trauma of mine injuries does indeed pose a serious problem for individuals and their families, and much of the work done by agencies working in disability focuses on services for these cases. However, there are many other, less visible, types of disability in Afghanistan, which require a different process of rehabilitation. These processes are to do with attitudes as well as finding practical solutions, and can only be achieved at a community level. By working in communities with and for disabled people, a set of human values are touched which provide an entry point for attitude and social change at a deeper level, which have to do with inclusion, participation, practical compassion, and community mobilisation.

This review considers the prevalence and causes of disability in Afghanistan, attitudes, services, a community based rehabilitation programme, and the relationship between disability, development and peace.

Prevalence and causes

Although no national survey has been done, local surveys indicate that about 3-4% of the population of Afghanistan is disabled to the point of needing some kind of service. In a population of 20 million, this means about 7-800,000 children, women and men. Conflict (mainly mines and UXOs) has created

amputees, blindness, and paralysis. Weak preventive services have resulted in a high incidence of disabling diseases such as polio and tuberculosis in many areas. A high rate of birth complications (especially in undernourished women) with inadequate medical care gives rise to disabilities such as cerebral palsy. Leprosy exists in certain areas. *Prevalence*--the number who survive--must be distinguished from *incidence*--the number born or made disabled. Incidence will always be higher than prevalence, but is very difficult to determine since many children born disabled and many of those who do not survive injury will die without even their birth or accident being reported.

While people with mobility impairments (polio and amputations) account for about half the disabled population and are generally visible, the equally significant other half, but much less visible, are those with sensory and multiple impairments. These are usually hidden from view, especially if they are women and children, trapped by their culture and lack of services within very narrow confines at home. While 3-4 % are directly disabled, if the disabled person is or was the main breadwinner in a family, the whole family is adversely affected. Thus, the actual proportion of the population affected by disability is probably higher than 15%.

Attitudes

Attitudes towards disabled people in a country as poor as Afghanistan may not

be as negative as they are in a wealthier society. Poverty is a great leveller. On the streets of an Afghan town, it is common to see a disabled child being pushed along in a crude cart by other children, with no sense of embarrassment. Amputees are such a common sight that they are accepted as part of the normal scene in a bazaar. The caring and concern shown by both mothers and fathers towards their disabled children, especially the mentally retarded, never fails to impress. The main problem is not neglect but over-protection, under-stimulation, and ignorance of how to help the child develop. Lack of knowledge about what to do with their mentally retarded child brings despair and hopelessness to parents, but as soon as they are shown ways and ideas, these attitudes can change.

That poverty is a great leveller does not mean it is better to be a disabled person in Afghanistan than in a developed country. First, the most important factor leading to the segregation of disabled people in Afghanistan concerns marriage. Where marriage is impossible, the individual lives in a kind of limbo, unable to raise a family, which is essential for recognition in the community. This applies to both men and women, but women are more affected than men are. Men may have the option of migrant labour or other pursuits that enable them to retain some respect, but a woman does not have these options. The meaning of her life is entirely attached to marriage and raising a family. Not only may a disabled person not be able to get married, but the presence of a congenitally disabled person in a family may affect the

marriage chances of other members of the family, because congenital disability may be regarded as transmissible, and cause resentment towards the disabled person by other members of his or her own family.

Secondly, the survival rate of disabled Afghans is low because of the lack of health services. There is, for example, almost no treatment for spinal injuries in Afghanistan, which means that many paraplegics (those paralysed from the waist down) and most quadriplegics (those paralysed from the neck down) die within a year of injury from complications like pressure sores, urinary tract infections or pneumonia.

Some disabilities are more 'acceptable' than others are. Amputees, partly because their ability to communicate and reproduce is not usually affected and partly because they may be regarded as having made a sacrifice in war, may be easily accepted. Other disabilities, especially congenital ones, are often regarded as shameful, and are largely absent from public view. It is common for parents to claim that their child became mentally retarded after a bomb attack in order to conceal the congenital nature of the disability.

Services: Who is doing what?

Orthopaedics and physiotherapy

Services for disabled people in Afghanistan have tended to focus on the provision of orthopaedic aids and physiotherapy. This is because the appalling conditions in most hospitals mean that a limb damaged by a mine explosion will be amputated rather than

saved, so amputees are the most visible manifestation of disability in the country. In addition, polio affects as many people as amputations with the difference that most polio victims are children, while most amputees are men. There are thirteen orthopaedic workshops in different parts of the country run by the ICRC, the Swedish Committee (as part of the CDAP programme), Guardians, Sandy Gall, and the Kuwait Joint Relief Committee. Most of these workshops provide both prostheses (artificial limbs) and orthoses (appliances to support limbs disabled by, for example, polio). Some of them make wheelchairs. Technicians are trained on the job. There are several different technologies used, but agencies have agreed to move towards a standardised technology based on polypropylene developed by the ICRC.

Despite these thirteen workshops there are still areas of the country such as the southwest and northwest where there are many amputees and polio victims with no access to orthopaedic services.

Sandy Gall, IAM, Guardians and ICRC train physiotherapists. A common curriculum has now been agreed between these four agencies, with the approval of the Institute for Intermediate Medical Education in Kabul, as a result of National Disability Workshops organised by CDAP and ACBAR. The intention is to move towards national recognition for the profession. There are currently about one hundred physiotherapists in the country, sixty-five of them employed in the CDAP programme.

Sensory and mental impairments

CDAP, SERVE, and HIFA (the Hearing-Impaired Foundation of Afghanistan) work with deaf people. They are currently working together to develop Afghan Sign Language. The Afghan Association of the Blind, SERVE, IAM, and CDAP work with blind people, teaching Braille and mobility. The biggest unmet need relates to mental disability, which accounts for the largest proportion in this half of the disabled population. CDAP provides support and training at the family level for mental disability in its CBR programme, but this type of disabled person would be better served in community centres rather than in home-based training. It is an area where there is an urgent need for combined efforts between specialist and general community development agencies.

Income generation

A number of NGOs and UN agencies offer or fund income-generating activities for disabled people. These include on a regular basis the Afghan Disabled Society, ASYA, Ockenden Venture, and Support Services for Disabled People, while ARR/UNOPS, UNHCR and UNICEF make grants on an occasional basis. AABRAR (Afghan Amputees for Bicycle Rehabilitation and Recreation) teaches amputees to ride bicycles and also basic literacy and other skills.

Coverage

Statistics have not so far been collected which give an accurate picture of how much of the disabled population has

been covered by existing services. However, it can be estimated that probably about one-tenth of the overall disabled population in need is currently covered. The great majority of present beneficiaries are people with mobility impairments (amputees and polio). People with sensory and mental impairments are greatly under-served.

Community based rehabilitation in Afghanistan

CDAP (the Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Programme) runs a community based rehabilitation (CBR) programme in six areas of the country. Developed as a concept at the same time as Primary Health Care in the late 1970's, CBR is a strategy within community development that seeks to mobilise all available resources at community level for the rehabilitation and integration of disabled people. The strategy requires field workers and volunteers to be trained in Primary Rehabilitation Therapy, community development and social animation. These workers and volunteers identify disabled people and arrange whatever rehabilitation activities are possible locally. In the CDAP programme in Afghanistan these activities include orthopaedic workshops, physiotherapy, home based primary rehabilitation therapy, integration in schools, training in Braille and mobility for blind people, instruction in sign language for deaf people, individual apprenticeships for income skills training, vocational training, and micro-credit loans. The programme employs 400 staff through three NGOs (Swedish Committee, CHA and Guardians) and touches the lives of some 30,000 disabled people per year. About

20% of the staff and 30% of the beneficiaries are female.

IAM plans to run a small CBR programme near Herat, and SERVE operates one in Nangahar. CDAP provides training for these organisations, and any others that may consider doing CBR programmes. CDAP also provides training for mainstream development organisations on awareness of disability issues and the inclusion of the disabled in their programmes.

CBR, development and peace

Community based rehabilitation can and does play a positive role in the creation of attitudes and behaviour based on important human values: acceptance instead of rejection, participation instead of exclusion, compassion instead of scorn, love instead of disdain. A CBR programme comes with few "goodies." The tangible things the programme offers are aids and appliances, small loans for micro-credit, and job training. Apart from these things, a CBR field worker approaches disabled people, their families and their communities mainly with "ideas and paper."

The potential for a CBR programme to contribute to development on a scale deeper and wider than disability rests on these field workers. How far can they be catalysts for wider change in the community? Their selection and training is of crucial importance. Besides learning about Primary Rehabilitation Therapy, their training also includes elementary psychology, social animation, teaching and learning, community mobilisation, family life, and other knowledge and skills of use in

social and community work. It is worth stressing that the physical energy required to be a CBR worker in rural Afghanistan is considerable. They have to travel large distances in extremes of climate on roads that in many cases hardly exist, either on foot or on a bicycle, or in one case on a horse. To keep up the level of visiting required day after day, month after month and year after year demands a very special kind of commitment. The surprise is that a CBR programme works at all under these conditions.

It is not only attitudes of non-disabled people towards disabled people that need to be changed. A vicious circle of discrimination produces a negative self-image in the disabled person and leads to further marginalisation. Helping disabled people to change their attitudes towards themselves is an important part of the rehabilitation process. One of the principle ways of doing this is to stimulate the formation of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), which enable disabled people to support each other, to escape from a victim mentality, to find their own strength to solve their problems, and to present a positive image to others.

The mechanisms for dialogue with local communities are the individual families, the CBR Committees (CBRCs) and Disabled People's Organisations at village and district level. The membership of the CBRCs is drawn from local health workers, teachers, disabled people, parents of disabled children and other interested persons. Sometimes they are congruent with local *shuras* dealing with general development issues in their own community;

sometimes they are independent of these *shuras*. Disability is not a power issue; it is not something which people fight over. These CBRCs represent neutral territory. Dialogue with these groups is likely therefore to yield a closer reading of what people think and feel about development issues generally, and they can be used as an entry point for such discussions. At the same time, their members often see their presence on the committee as giving them more status in the community than they had before, as well as experience of organising, debating, and deciding. Separate female CBRCs exist in both Taliban and non-Taliban held areas. Disability does indeed open pathways to a different view of development that is not based either on power or on materialism.

For example, the minutes of a CBRC in Herat in January 1998 reveal that over two meetings they discussed the following issues: finding a place to run a vocational training course in tailoring for disabled women, raising the money to provide lunch for the trainees, identifying a skilled person to act as trainer, the lack of textbooks in schools, home schooling for girls, malnutrition in several families. They arranged the training course successfully, and identified women who could provide home schooling for girls. As can be seen, their discussions were not limited to disability issues. They were obviously and justifiably proud of the two achievements of arranging the tailoring course and home schooling for girls. The field worker, who had instigated the formation of this committee, remained in the background, observing and encouraging, a genuine but discreet change agent. Something

was happening in this community that
was indeed developmental.