

Evaluation of the National Area-based Development Programme (NABDP) in Afghanistan

Final Report

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Evaluation Team

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
CDC	Community Development Council
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDP	District Development Plan
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livelihoods
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National area-based Development Program
NSP	National Solidarity Program
PRRD	Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation of Phase 3 of the National Area-based Development Program (NABDP) in Afghanistan. NABDP is a joint intervention of UNDP and the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) under the National Implementation Modality (NIM). It commenced in 2002, after the Taliban regime was overthrown, was extended into a second phase (2006-2008) and is now in this third phase which is expected to conclude in June 2015. The total planned budget for phase 3 was \$294 million.

NABDP seeks to reduce poverty and vulnerability through a dual focus on productive rural infrastructure and institutionalisation of District Development Assemblies (DDAs), with gender as a cross cutting theme.

The **purpose** of the evaluation is accountability and learning. The primary users of the evaluation are UNDP and MRRD who will use the findings to inform the design of a follow on project as well as to manage the current program more effectively.

The **methodology** consisted primarily of document review and semi-structured interviews with two field visits to Herat and Kunduz regional centres. The evaluation is limited by the small size of the team, the short duration, the complications of logistics and security, and the quality of data.

Findings

Effectiveness NABDP has delivered some important results in a very complex environment, with reasonable effectiveness:

- DDAs have been established in a total of 388 districts during Phases 2 and 3 and are performing, as would be expected in the context, in a range from excellent to weak. Most have implemented at least one project and some have been able to attract new and larger investments from other donors. The capable DDAs are limited only by availability of funds.
- Communities have benefited from improved access to energy, irrigation and transport infrastructure through around 2,000 projects although it is nowhere near enough to meet their needs. Where the intention of the infrastructure was to increase agricultural output, there is insufficient information to know whether this has happened. All infrastructures has been requested by the communities but not all is productive.
- Thousands of jobs have been created, mainly through casual labour in construction. This has provided families with short term income. Few sustainable jobs were created. Women have been included as members of the DDAs or in advisory arrangements appropriate to the context. A small number of women have benefited from economic empowerment projects separate from the mainstream infrastructure projects.

The main factors influencing positive achievement of results are the commitment of NABDP staff, ownership of the Provincial Rural Development Departments of, and the availability of sufficient funds. Factors limiting achievement are the thin spread of resources across all provinces and the low level of funding in some provinces.

Efficiency has been positively influenced by the NIM modality, enabling strong ownership at central and provincial level, and the ability of staff to access less secure areas by adopting the kind of low profile impossible in UNDP and the international NGOs. NABDP is cost effective for the implementation of projects, which are mainly of high quality and a source of pride for DDAs. Efficiency has been negatively influenced by the donor practice of earmarking, which results in huge imbalance between provinces, and petitions from parliamentarians, which result in a huge backlog of designed projects for which there is no available funding.

Assessment of **impact** is beyond the scope of the evaluation and limited by availability of data. If there has been impact, it is small scale and unfocused. Overall in Afghanistan, poverty and vulnerability have not decreased. MRRD has sought to be equitable in the distribution of resources to all provinces under a policy of 'some for all, not all for some' but earmarking has made this impossible to realise.

Sustainability is weak. The DDAs have proved unsustainable in the face of changed subnational governance policy although the momentum created around local level governance for aid effectiveness may be sustainable. Much of the infrastructure is not sustainable as there is no arrangement for operation and maintenance except in micro hydro power.

Conclusions

Relevance NABDP is a broadly relevant program, fitting within the rural development pillar of the Afghan National Development Strategy and within UNDP's priorities for poverty reduction and subnational governance. It could have been more relevant had there been shared perspectives among the main stakeholders. MRRD was driven by the political imperative of perceived equity, which led to a very thin spread across all provinces rather than the poverty focused area-based approach preferred by UNDP. Donors supported NABDP for different reasons but some of the largest funding was targeted in line with political and security objectives rather than poverty-focused development. These factors confused the identity of NABDP and reduced its relevance to some extent.

Effectiveness and efficiency has been relatively good. Though there are weaknesses, the very strong point is that it is a program implemented by government and contributing to the overarching objective of improving trust between government and the people by delivering needed services. The weakness of NABDP has been its inability to develop and adhere to plans which are linked to available budget. District development plans have far more projects than can ever be implemented and this creates frustration. Effectiveness in terms of achieving increase in agricultural output could have been improved had more infrastructure been delivered with that specific objective.

Learning

Focus is a political issue. In such a seriously conflict-affected country, MRRD has to be seen to be delivering in all provinces and the Minister comes under sustained pressure to commit resources equitably. The area-based concept, with a focused approach, was therefore probably never going to be possible. Any design needs to take the political economy into account.

Bottom up planning is not enough to achieve impact. The felt needs of communities are not always in line with the mandate of MRRD or the objectives of the project related to agriculture and livelihoods. They also may not have the specialist knowledge or vision about what is possible.

Bottom up planning therefore needs to be complemented by top down planning for economic growth based on sound analysis.

MRRD has little impact on agricultural outputs in the absence of an agriculture plan. NABDP has coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture (MAIL) in order to prevent duplication but there is no mechanism for linkage between ministries for strategic planning purposes

Working close to peri-urban centres may have more impact this is already happening by default because populations are clustered near provincial centres for security, jobs, education and markets. It would be much more cost effective than trying to reach remote and often insecure areas. However, it would be politically unpopular and would need a careful rationale.

Establishing new institutions takes a very long time If MRRD wished to implement through cluster CDCs, experience indicates that it will be a long, slow and difficult process. With declining resources there would be too many clusters for this method to be effective or efficient and the same sustainability issues would arise over time.

Projects do not develop core capacity As a parallel project, NABDP has added capacity at both central and provincial level but not built it. When NABDP closes, little will be left. A new design should begin to address the issue by building the management arrangements around core departments of the ministry.

Design challenges

Building on what exists is likely to be more effective than starting in a new place. A design which seeks to involve five ministries, in a concept of livelihoods and economic growth that is unfamiliar, is likely to fail. Continuing with MRRD and focusing on making infrastructure productive is conceptually simpler with a greater chance of success.

Agreeing a realistic, affordable and sustainable implementation mechanism is important but complicated. A stronger role for the PRRDs will be important but, in the absence of decentralisation policy, will need an experimental approach. NABDP was successful in initiating DDAs and can potentially lead in establishing a workable means of planning at provincial level.

Breaking with governance will be important to avoid the risk of business continuing as usual. Though there is a process in place for assessing capacity of DDAs and converting some of them to the new District Coordination Councils (DCCs) there is insufficient capacity, including resources, for this to happen in the foreseeable future.

UNDP needs a stronger role in oversight this particularly applies to quality. Some aspects are important to factor into the design so that government staff are safeguarded from excessive political influence.

Main Report

1. Introduction

This is an evaluation of the National Area-based Development Program (NABDP). NABDP is a joint program of the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which is now in the final year of its third phase.

The evaluation is commissioned at a time when the design for a follow-on project is taking place. Owing to changes in subnational governance policy, the follow-on project is expected to be fundamentally different from NABDP rather than being a fourth phase. Therefore, UNDP and MRRD are interested in learning lessons that can contribute to program development. The timing is also important as 2014 is the year in which major political and security transitions take place in Afghanistan.

The primary users of the evaluation are UNDP, MRRD and project donors as they continue their partnership for poverty reduction through rural development.

The report is structured in four sections. Section 1 introduces the program, the scope and focus of the evaluation, the key questions, and the methodology. Section 2 presents the findings, according to the intended outcomes of the program (effectiveness), efficiency, impact, sustainability and learning. Section 3 draws conclusions from the findings and Section 4 presents options and recommendations for the ongoing design.

1.1 Description of NABDP

History and context

NABDP is a joint intervention of UNDP and the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) under the National Implementation Modality (NIM). It commenced in 2002, after the Taliban regime was overthrown and was extended into a second phase from 2006-2008. It is now in its third phase of implementation and is expected to conclude in June 2015.

The context in Afghanistan is well known. Although considerable development gains have been made over the last decade, the country is still deeply affected by conflict and insurgency. Human development indicators are amongst the lowest in the world and the status of women is chronically low. During the lifetime of NABDP there were improvements in security until 2005 but subsequently there has been deterioration. International military forces have been present and many provinces have had Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Many aid donors have aligned their development assistance with the PRTs, including several contributing to NABDP.

In 2014, NATO troops are withdrawing from Afghanistan and Afghan security forces are assuming responsibility in a transitional process. There is also a political transition with Presidential elections in April, just before this evaluation. The next ten years will therefore be different from the last and have been termed the Transformation Decade.

Goal and intended outcomes

The goal of NABDP is to contribute to a sustainable reduction of poverty and an improvement of livelihoods in rural Afghanistan through a comprehensive area based development approach. It is UNDP's largest program oriented to poverty reduction and is currently situated in the Subnational Governance and Development Unit (SNGDU). In MRRD, NABDP sits with the very large National Solidarity Program (NSP) as part of the governance stream of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). In UNDP, NABDP contributes to Outcome 6 of the Country Program Document which is concerned with development of livelihoods, private sector and public-private partnerships.

The intended outcomes of NABDP have been expressed differently in each phase - variously as strategies, components, outcomes, results, and outputs. These do not compare directly but can be broadly summarised as shown in the table:

Phase 1 (components)	Phase 2 (outcomes)	Phase 3 (dual focus)
Immediate recovery support and macroeconomic regeneration	Empowered community institutions	Productive infrastructure to link rural communities to broader MRRD strategy
Capacity development to plan, finance and manage	Increased institutional capacity and technical capability in MRRD	Strengthen and institutionalise District Development Assemblies (DDAs)

Rationale

The rationale for an area-based approach was the uneven development that had occurred since 2002. NABDP aimed to focus on specific geographical areas, investing in productive infrastructure, local economic development and subnational governance in order to reduce disparities between areas and groups. It envisaged a shift away from direct construction of schools, clinics, primary roads and water and sanitation in favour of developing partnerships with more relevant MRRD programs and other line ministries with related mandates. During this third phase, NABDP has been extended by MRRD beyond the envisaged specific geographical areas to cover all 34 provinces.

The design had an exit strategy which would migrate key responsibilities and functions to two MRRD departments: the Afghanistan Institute for Rural Development (AIRD) and the Community Led Development Department (CLDD). Capacity would be built to support this. In 2009, UNDP envisaged exit to be almost complete as measured by a significant reduction in international staff between phases 2 and 3.

Thematic areas

NABDP has three thematic areas:

1. ***Institutionalisation of District Development Assemblies (DDAs)***. Phase 1 mainly focused on immediate infrastructure support, channelling it through the Community Development Councils (CDCs) of NSP and private contractors. In Phase 2 the (DDAs) were established with the intention that they would become the development gateway at district level, able to link communities with government. This gave them dual functions as a new level of local governance between CDCs and the centre, and also as the implementation mechanism for MRRD programs. During Phase 3, at the same time that NABDP was seeking to institutionalise the DDAs, various agencies were establishing other district level entities. This led to confusion and territorial disputes with the result that, in 2013, Presidential Decree No. 45 was issued, paving the way for the creation of District Coordinating Councils (DCCs) and the abolition of all other district level structures. This has been a very significant change for

NABDP because DDAs underpinned the entire delivery strategy and is the main reason why a fourth phase is inappropriate.

2. **Sustainable livelihoods through rural infrastructure services** The intention of productive infrastructure was that it would provide a pathway to enhance sustainable rural livelihoods. Substantive outputs were planned to be: i) the incubation and development of a rural energy institution that would develop a renewable energy policy and pilot innovative technologies and approaches; and ii) small scale infrastructure that would promote agricultural productivity, in the context of integrated natural resource management.
3. **Stabilisation through enhanced economic livelihoods** The theory behind this component was that the enabling environment for stabilisation requires multi-stakeholder investment. It envisaged closer links with the foreign military-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and private sector small and medium enterprises that would help to analyse local markets and value chains and become agents of change. NABDP would also continue with the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG), integrated Agricultural Livelihoods Program 9IALP-K2), and the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF).

Resources

The total planned budget for Phase III was \$294 million, most of which has been mobilised. Year by year the budget has varied.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Budget US\$	36,293,594	57,480,060	103,458,493	64,271,034	56,174,622

NABDP is managed from a central office based at MRRD in Kabul through a network of seven regional offices and 24 provincial offices. In 2010 there were 540 staff but, with an almost 100% increase in program budget in 2011, 180 additional staff were hired and the number of provincial offices grew from 14 to 20. A UNDP functional review¹ at the end of 2012 rationalized the structure, functions and staffing in the light of a decreasing budget for 2013. Of the current staff, the majority hold MRRD contracts on an annual basis at salaries higher than government tashkeel staff. Six staff holds UNDP service contracts, and two staff is international.

1.2 Evaluation scope, purpose and questions

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is twofold: to evaluate the programme employing the standard UNDP evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, with reference to gender ; and to inform the planning and design of a follow on intervention when NABDP comes to an end in mid-2015.

Scope and focus

The scope of the evaluation is all components of Phase III from 2009 to April 2014, across all the 33 provinces geographical areas covered by NABDP. In order to make the evaluation manageable, emphasis was placed at outcome level with minimal attention paid to output and activity level.

¹ *Functional Review – National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP)*. Dec 2012

The focus of the evaluation was on utilisation, especially to inform the formulation mission which took place at the same time.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference (Annex 6) were organised according to the standard DAC and UNPD criteria: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact and sustainability. The evaluators structured these questions in a way that would logically tell the story of NABDP and highlight the main issues for the future, as shown below.

Key evaluation question	Sub Questions
1. What are the results of NABDP? <i>Effectiveness and efficiency</i>	1.1 To what extent has NABDP achieved its priority outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do DDAs have improved capacity? • Has agricultural output and access to diversified food at household level increased? • Do vulnerable people in unstable areas have improved opportunities for decent work and income? • Has an enabling environment been created for the equal participation and benefits of women and men? 1.2 What are the main factors affecting achievement of results? 1.3 Have resources been used in the most efficient way?
2. What does this mean in the current context? <i>Relevance, impact and sustainability</i>	2.1 Have the outputs of NABDP served the objective of poverty reduction? 2.2 What has been learned about equity? 2.3 Does the NABDP theory of change of 2009 remain valid in 2014? 2.4 How has NABDP adapted to changes in subnational governance policy? 2.5 Which benefits of NABDP are sustainable at this stage?
3. What are the implications for the future? <i>Learning and recommendations</i>	3.1 How can MRRD engage in subnational governance to increase impact on rural livelihoods? 3.2 What modality is appropriate and sustainable for the transformation decade? 3.3 How can impact for rural women be improved?

1.3 Evaluation approach and methods

Approach

The approach to the evaluation was interactive, with emphasis on utilisation and the maximum possible engagement of stakeholders responsible for program development.

Methods

Detail of the methods used in relation to each question can be found in Annex 1. For quantitative analysis, documentary sources and data available in the Management Information System were used. For qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews, group interviews and observation were used in Kabul and in two provinces to gain deeper insights. As the evaluation progressed, interviews could be increasingly focused as the key issues emerged. Selection of the provinces was based on what was possible within the constraints of time, security concerns and available airline schedules.

In the two provinces selected – Herat and Kunduz – the team was able to meet with the Regional Program Managers as well as Provincial Managers from Baghlan, Badakshan, Farah, Ghor, and Badghis. Visits were made to two DDAs in Enjeel (Herat) and Aliabad (Kunduz) and two sets of group

interviews were conducted with DDAs from several districts in Herat (all male) and from one district in each of the provinces in Kunduz region (male and female). Telephone interviews were used for selected Provincial Managers in order to get geographical diversity as well as face to face meetings with the Regional Managers of central, east and south east regions.

Observation was an important method. It enabled assessment of physical facilities such as DDA, PRRD and NABDP offices as well as levels of engagement in meetings and interaction between men and women.

Data analysis

In order to bring consistency to the evaluation in terms of assessing outcomes, a simple, theory of change was reconstructed and used as the basis of discussion with most stakeholders (see Section 2). Notes were made on the one-page conceptual diagram, which could then be compared and analysed for similarities and differences. The method drew out contextual factors as well as the various assumptions on which the theory of change was based.

In the face of the many limitations (see below), the expert knowledge of the evaluators was very important in determining how representative the findings from the two provincial visits were and whether generalisations could be drawn. This includes knowledge and experience of very different provinces, such as Uruzgan in the south, as well as a range of sectoral programs. Experience over a long timeframe (more than two decades) enabled judgements to be made about the extent and quality of aspects such as capacity building and ownership.

Towards the end of the field mission, the evaluators held sessions with key project personnel, senior MRRD officials and UNDP staff to present preliminary findings. The questions and discussions that followed were helpful in clarifying findings and defining key issues, especially for the future design.

Stakeholder engagement

Staff of NABDP engaged positively in the evaluation and MIS section was very helpful in providing graphic analyses to assist the team to demonstrate particular points. The absence of key staff at the end of the evaluation, owing to a natural disaster in Badakhshan, meant that final feedback could not be obtained. UNDP staff, including international personnel of NABDP ensured a good program and helpful logistics. Of donors to NABDP, it was only possible to arrange meetings with the embassies of Australia and Japan, and the mission of the European Union within the time available.

Evaluation team

There were only two members of the evaluation team. The international team leader has 26 years' experience across multiple sectors, with specialisation in capacity development and conflict in several countries. She has been involved with Afghanistan since 1988. The Afghan consultant specialises in governance and policy. Although both have general experience of rural development, the evaluation would have benefited from a specialist member.

1.4 Limitations of the evaluation

All evaluations in Afghanistan are highly constrained by the prevailing insecurity. It limits where consultants can travel and under what conditions stakeholders can be consulted. Particular limitations of this evaluation were the small size of the team and the short duration of 30 days. This is inadequate for a high budget and complex program which is operational in all provinces. A larger

team would have allowed splitting up in order to cover more provinces and a longer mission would have allowed more provincial visits.

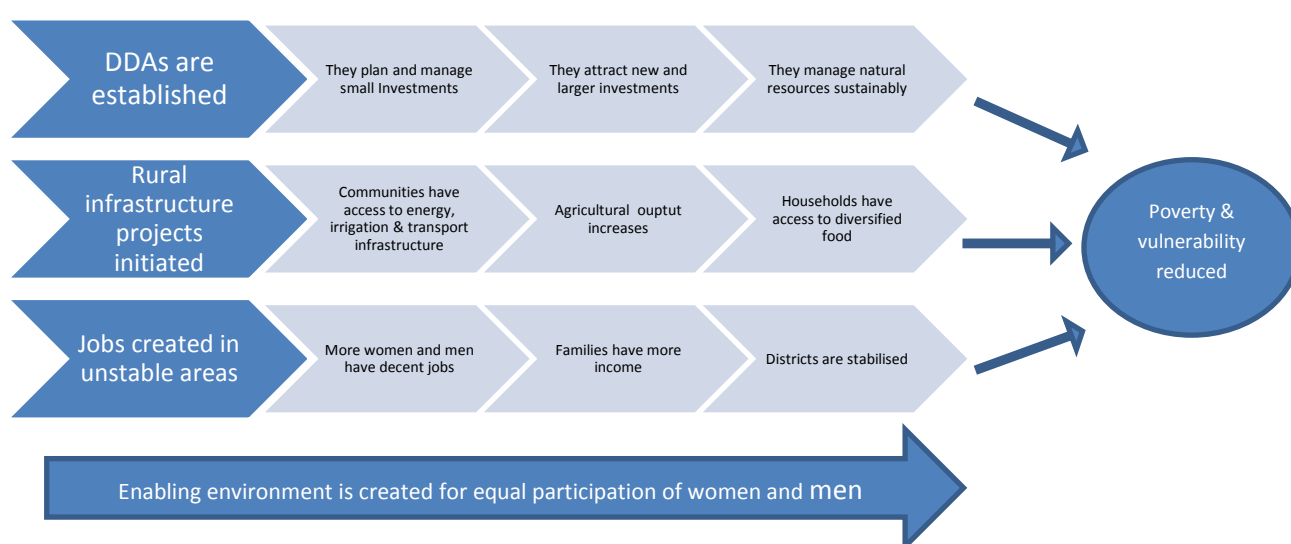
Evaluations are also limited by the quality of the data available. In common with most other projects in Afghanistan, NABDP has collected data on inputs, outputs and activities but has minimal data on outcomes. At the higher level there is data from the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (2010-12). Aside from the fact that it shows no significant reduction in poverty, it would be impossible to attribute any change to a single project such as NABDP.

These limitations were mitigated to some extent by narrowing the scope of the evaluation and being selective about the issues investigated. Direct beneficiaries of the projects implemented by DDAs were not consulted as their views could not be generalised beyond the specific case. However, the beneficiary assessment undertaken for the Assessment of Development Results (2009-13) provided reasonably reliable evidence across 40 DDAs and communities.

The team are reasonably confident that assessment of effectiveness is fair. The same confidence cannot be applied to efficiency as the team had neither the time, the information, nor the skills to undertake even a limited cost-benefit analysis.

2. Findings

This section of the report assesses the results of NABDP in terms of the extent to which priority outcomes have been achieved. For the purpose of the evaluation, the team reconstructed a theory of change in order to assess progress. This is expressed below.



2.1 Results of DDA capacity building

The purpose of establishing DDAs was to create community-based institutions that could catalyse and facilitate development at the district level. This was part of a broader MRRD strategy to strengthen local governance, align program interventions from community to the centre, and develop a voluntarism that can sustain socio-economic and infrastructure development at district level.

As a measure of achievement of intermediate outcomes, the evaluators assessed whether DDAs could plan and manage small investments, move on to attract new and larger investments, and then manage district natural resources in a sustainable way.



The establishment of DDAs, started in Phase 2, has resulted in a total of 388 DDAs in 33 of the 34 provinces. It proved impossible in Paktika owing to the particular geography and presence of insurgents. The process of establishment included training courses in local governance, conflict resolution, participatory planning, gender equity, project management, procurement, financial management and disaster risk reduction. New DDAs are provided with a small Grant in Aid and established DDAs receive ongoing support. All DDAs have developed their own District Development Plan (DDP), which are updated every three years.

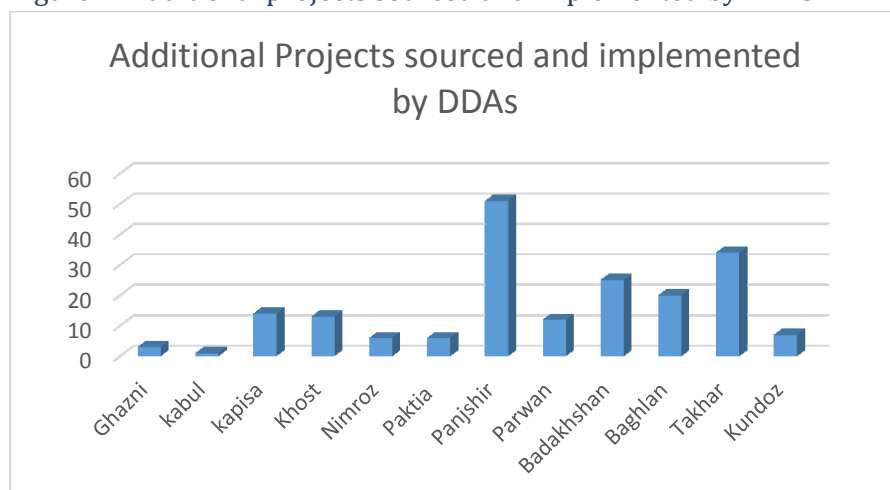
Re-elections have been held for each DDA after three years. On average three quarters of DDA members are men although this masks considerable variation. A strength of NABDP is the recognition of the different ability of women to participate across the country and the different ways of addressing and monitoring that. Annex 2 shows the geographical distribution of DDAs according to whether they are all male, mixed, have a separate advisory committee or have a women's group. The male-only DDAs are found in the most socially and religiously conservative parts of the country.

Management of small and large investments

Most DDAs have implemented at least one project, either themselves or through one or more CDCs. Where CDCs implement, the DDAs are responsible for monitoring. Their level of satisfaction is reportedly high and was verified by those interviewed. They believe they can implement more cheaply and report a superior quality result.

Some DDAs have managed to attract and manage other projects. There is some monitoring information about the number of projects delivered with funds obtained from outside NABDP and this is shown in the bar chart below.

Figure 1: Additional projects sourced and implemented by DDAs



However, data has not been gathered systematically and the bar chart is incomplete. For example, there is no information for Herat yet the team visited Enjeel DDA and heard about numerous projects using funds from the Italian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The Provincial Governor particularly praised an 82 metre bridge, costing \$160,000 commenting that it was very economical, of very good quality, and used by a very large number of people who were now able to easily cross the river to access the provincial centre.

The ability to attract new and larger resources is, in part, a function of the capacity of the DDA. In addition to capacity building as part of NABDP, some DDAs have benefited from other inputs. The large number of projects in Takhar, Badakshan and Baghlan reflects the presence of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), which has supported the DDAs with capacity building courses and exposure visits as well as providing them with substantial grants to implement mutually agreed projects. In Panjshir, almost 50 projects were implemented.

During a group interview, DDA representatives from Moqur district in Badghis described how they had attracted funds from the NGOs World Vision, and BRAC, including a major project valued US\$ 40,000.

Capacity of DDAs

The capacity of DDAs varies considerably and, as would be expected in a large, diverse and fragile country, there is a spectrum ranging from excellent, through very good, good enough, weak to barely existent. Factors affecting capacity are personal, spatial, contextual, social and financial.

Personal characteristics of the members are very important, especially their level of commitment in terms of getting things done. Education is important in terms of comprehending procedures, dealing with project management and supervising contractors. Status is also important in terms of commanding the respect of communities and government officials. Spatial factors, in particular distance from the provincial centre are important. Proximity enables easy access to officials and NABDP staff either to lobby for support or to sort out problems. To some extent this is a proxy for higher levels of education but remoteness is also an independent variable as it affects ability to travel. The time involved and the cost may be considerable and beyond the means of many DDA members. Contextual factors include the level of security or insecurity, which is a critical factor determining whether DDA members can travel, either to meet each other or to access support.

Social and contextual factors largely determine the level of women's participation. Though the capacity of women shares many of the same characteristics as that of men, women face additional challenges relating to their lower status, cultural requirements for separation in some cases, and their ability to travel. In Herat the team met only male members of DDAs. In Kunduz, one man and one woman from each of four DDAs were able to travel from each province and meet together with the evaluation team even though they had not met each other. This shows the importance of the particular context in determining the extent of women's participation but demonstrates that, in some parts of the country, relatively full participation is possible.

Enjeel DDA – excellence in capacity

During the visit of the evaluation team to Enjeel DDA in Herat province, a wide range of capacities were observed:

- The DDA had secured funds for a very nice building with three spaces for meeting and a library
 - A nicely presented organogram was on the wall, showing the structure of the DDA and the roles of the members. Each member had a photograph, including the women
 - The DDA Chair was well educated and a prominent businessman who was clearly respected
 - A community training was in process with men and women actively participating
 - Two disputing landowners visited the DDA chair to update him on resolution of the issue
 - Files were on display with details of the projects and funding
 - A leaflet had been produced informing the public about the DDAs function and achievement
-

Availability of funding

Many DDAs have the capacity to undertake considerably more but are limited by the availability of funds. Each DDA has a District Development Plan (DDP), which lists all the needed or desired projects. Of these, only a small proportion can be implemented. This leads to frustration in most of the DDAs, regardless of whether they have been beneficiaries of substantial donor funding or whether they have had very little.

Beneficiary assessment

The evaluation team was unable to meet direct beneficiaries of the projects implemented under NABDP but was able to draw on the findings of a survey of beneficiaries undertaken in late 2012.²

The assessment described NABDP as having ‘remarkable outreach’ with capacity to introduce higher levels of government accountability, prioritise development projects, assess humanitarian needs, monitor development implementations and bridge what is often seen as the widening gap between the government and communities. At the same time, capacity and interest of DDAs was described as ‘enormously uneven’.

Of those community members interviewed, 40 per cent had positive perceptions of DDAs and 70% thought the projects were of good or acceptable quality (some of which were supported by other agencies in addition to NABDP). This was true even in the difficult provinces of the south and east. Weaknesses were some lack of clarity of roles, unclear processes for project selection, a bias towards the district and provincial centres, and lack of awareness that communities were responsible for maintenance after project completion. Dissatisfaction with project outcomes were related to corruption of DDA members, mismanagement, poor quality construction materials and premature degradation.

The study found that the capacity of female members was generally lower than males and that they were less likely to attend meetings because of household obligations, objections of male family members, or lack of control over cash to travel.

² *Fieldwork Synthesis of NABDP Beneficiary Assessment* Samuel Hall Consulting for UNDP. Oct 2012. This was based on a sample of 42 sites in the provinces of Badakhshan, Badghis, Balkh, Helmand, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, and Paktia.

With regard to the District Development Plans (DDPs), there was a discrepancy between the intention– that they are drawn from the Community Development Plans and link upwards to the Provincial Development Plans (PDPs) – and the reality that the linkages were often not made. Some Provincial Council members, who were responsible for developing the PDPs had not read the DDPs at all but drew up the PDPs from their own perception of the priority needs of their province.

Adaptation to changes in subnational governance policy

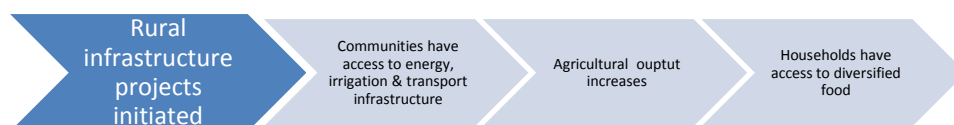
NABDP has adapted well to changes in subnational governance policy. When DDAs were first established there was no district level governance mechanism and therefore no mechanism to implement between national level and CDCs. Over time, a number of other district level mechanisms were introduced by various agencies which created confusion and led to competition. As a result, Presidential *Decree Number 45* (July 2012) paved the way for the establishment of a single District Development Council (DCC). This was difficult for NABDP because staff felt that the DDAs were working effectively. However, as a result of concerted efforts on both sides, IDLG and MRRD agreed a *Policy for Improving Governance and Development in Districts and Villages* in May 2013. This has been a positive result which has not interrupted support to DDAs other than slowing and stopping re-election processes. For the remainder of this phase, NABDP is working with IDLG in two pilot provinces to assess the capacity of the DDA and convert the strong ones to the new District Coordinating Committees (DCCs).

Managing natural resources

The theory of change envisages DDAs moving on from managing projects to managing the districts natural resources sustainably. Although there have been a number of projects that help to protect natural resources, such as protection walls to prevent flooding, managing district level resources is, for the most part, beyond the capacity of DDAs. This is an issue which needs to be led by the various government departments through policy and cannot be left to a voluntary organisation without either the know-how or the resources, however capable.

2.2 Results of rural infrastructure provision

The logic of implementing rural infrastructure projects in NABDP 3 is that providing communities with access to energy, irrigation and transport infrastructures, will lead to an increase in agricultural output in the area and, subsequently provide communities with access to diversified food.



Access to rural infrastructure

The design envisaged that infrastructure provided under NABDP would have a tight focus:

- Agriculture infrastructure - filling immediate gaps that would promote agricultural productivity and rural economic development such as market oriented infrastructure, post-harvest technologies and farm-to-market roads
- Water management - focus on irrigation, water catchment and surface water management.
- Rural energy – establishment and incubation of a renewable energies unit

Fig 1 shows the types of project that have been delivered under Phase 3;

Fig 1: Category and number of infrastructure projects

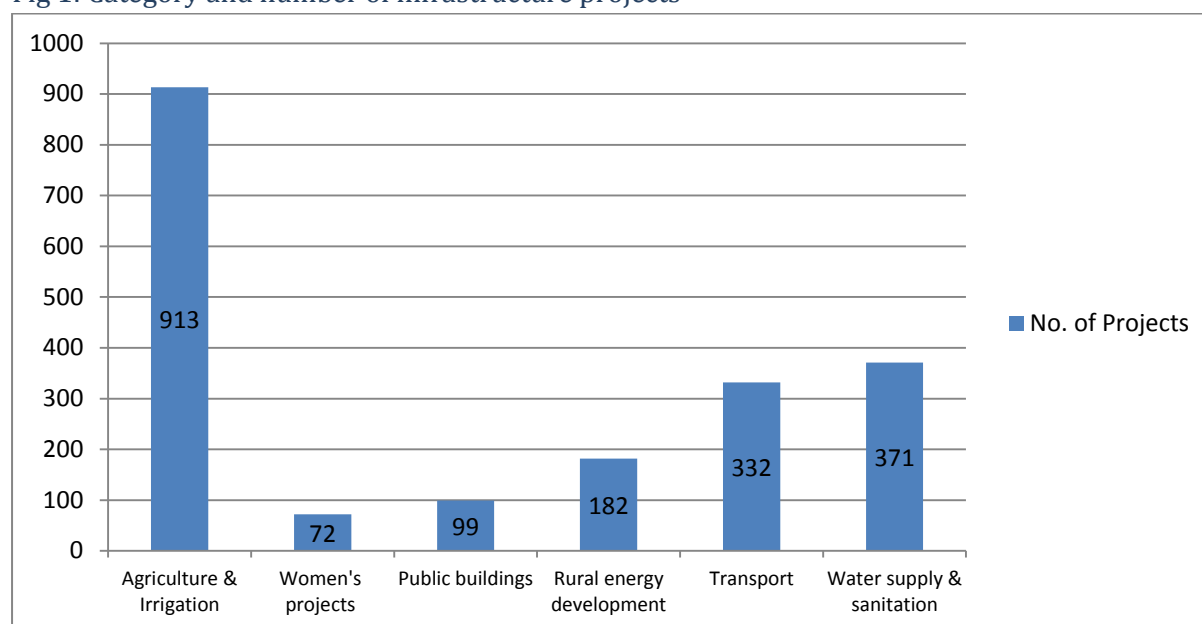
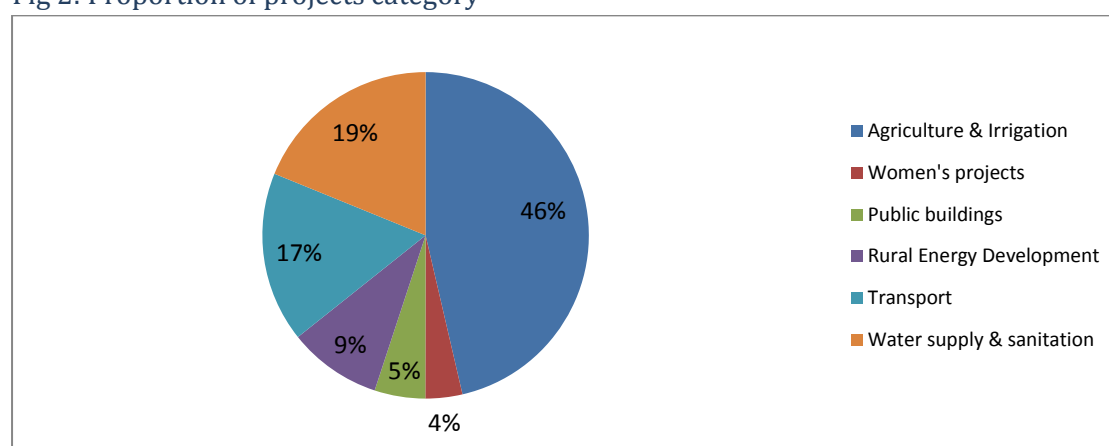


Fig 2: Proportion of projects category



Reading figures 2 and 3 together we can see that agriculture and irrigation projects are the largest category, comprising about half of the total (46%). These include a range of interventions such as water intakes, irrigation channels, and small dams and so on. Transport (17%), covers infrastructure such as bridges, access roads as well as disaster management infrastructure such as retaining and protection walls and flood-wash and storm control. Including energy (9%), we can say that 72% of projects provide communities with access to energy, irrigation and transport infrastructures as intended.

The other 28%, comprising drinking water (19%), public buildings and women's projects have a less direct or no relationship with agriculture. That is not to say that the projects are not wanted or needed. They include buildings such as health clinics, schools, parking areas, cafeteria, library, kindergarten and other things that make a difference to people's quality of life. Some of the women's projects have also potentially linked to productivity. However, they were not what was

intended in NABDP and reflect a focus on providing communities with choice rather than directing them towards agriculture and economic development.

Fig 3: Comparison of proportion of projects by proportion of budget

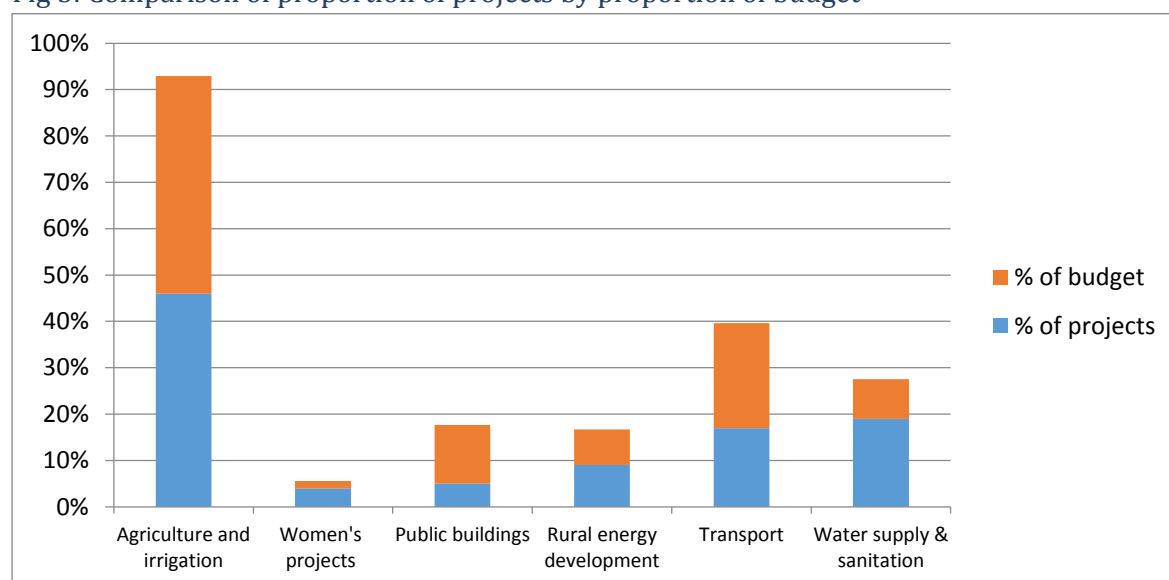
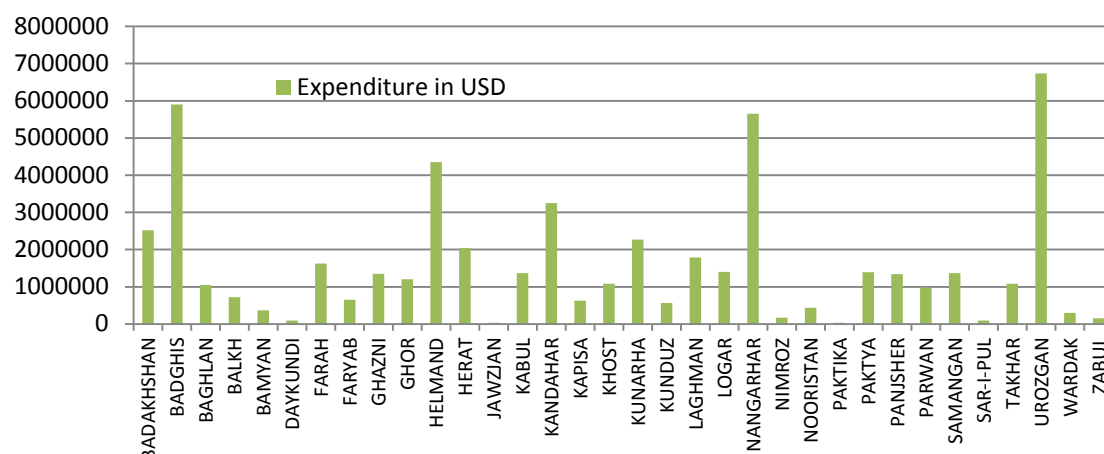


Figure 3 shows the proportion of projects in relation to the proportion of budget they consume. This shows that agriculture and irrigation spend is in proportion as is, approximately, transport and energy. Public buildings are not only not productive infrastructure but they are relatively costly. These have decreased but not yet phased out. In 2012 five schools were constructed and, in 2013, two health clinics. In contrast, water supply and sanitation and women's projects are relatively cheaper. A full cost benefit analysis is beyond the scope of this evaluation and would need to take into account of a range of factors. Within each category there is considerable variation in scale and costs. This is further complicated by the location of a project as the cost of construction materials, transport and labour is considerably more in some of the insecure areas.

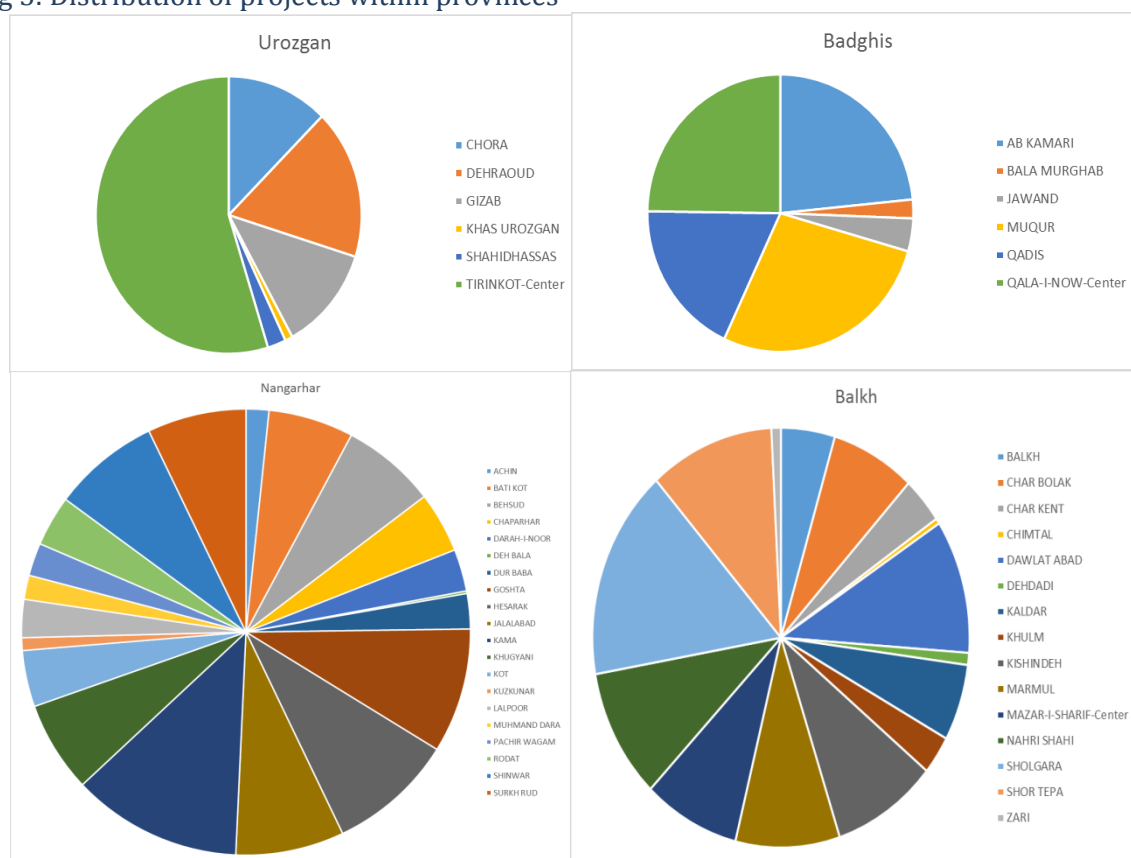
Answering the question about whether communities have access to infrastructure requires an analysis of distribution of benefits. Fig.4 shows expenditure on irrigation infrastructure over the years 2010 up to 2013 by province.

Fig. 4: Illustration of resource used in irrigation infrastructures in the provinces



This shows very high expenditure in Urozgan, Badghis, Nangarhar and Helmand. If we then look at expenditure within the province, there is also considerable variation. The pie diagrams below show relatively even distribution between districts for Nangarhar and slightly less so, but still in most districts in Balkh. In Badghis, two districts have considerably less than the other four. In Urozgan, the provincial centre, Tirin Kot, has more than half the expenditure.

Fig 5: Distribution of projects within provinces



The differences between provinces can largely be explained by earmarking and the substantial differences in levels of funding. Within provinces, differences can largely be explained by access or lack of access owing to security and remoteness, which often go hand in hand. Other factors depend on the capacity of the DDAs and the level of demand from the central or provincial politicians and MRRD and PRRDs.

In 2014, a high proportion of the overall budget for NABDP is for Badghis. A large project aims to bring water from Qadis district to provide a water supply system for the provincial capital. It will benefit around 200,000 people at a cost of almost \$14 million. It is a priority need of the community in a province which has severe water shortage but it is much bigger than anything undertaken so far in NABDP and therefore very high risk.

Transport projects have also been distributed unequally. Five provinces - Uruzgan, Nimroz, Kandahar, Kabul and Balkh have allocations of between \$250,000 and \$3.5 million. At the other end of the scale, eight provinces - Zabul, Paktika, Nuristan, Laghman, Kunar, Khost, Kapisa and Ghazni – have had no transport related infrastructure under NABDP.

Micro hydro power the design of Phase 3 has supported the institutionalisation of the Renewable Energy and Enterprise Development Department. At the time of the evaluation, and a success for NABDP, a design for a standalone project was in process. The micro hydro power projects implemented in Phase 3 have been fewer but more sustainable than other categories. They are unevenly distributed owing to the need for particular geological and water conditions which are only found in certain provinces, namely Badakhshan, Ghor, Takhar, Samangan and Nangarhar. Between 2010 and 2014, 182 projects have been implemented to a value of \$8.8 million, directly benefiting around 200,000 people in 19 provinces.

Qualitative evidence has been gathered by NABDP indicating that communities not only use the electricity generated to light their houses but also for small scale economic activities such as tailoring, bakery, carpentry, computer use and copy facilities. In Nangarhar, the presence of MHP in the communities led electricity transmission cable companies to mobilize and produce in the province.

Increase in agricultural output

The previous section has aimed to show that NABDP has succeeded in providing access to a range of rural infrastructure. For those communities receiving a project, large proportions have received something they have identified as their need. However, the reach of NABDP is small, even in those provinces where donors have earmarked substantial amounts of funds. Across all provinces and districts demand far exceeds supply.

The logic for the infrastructure component is that increased access to infrastructure will lead to an increase in agricultural output. At this point, the M&E system for NABDP, which can provide excellent data on inputs and outputs, contains very little information on which to base a judgement about outcomes. In a small number of cases, information is collected about increase in agricultural yield resulting, for example, from an irrigation system.

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence about the successes of individual project. For example, the Karokh Bridge, constructed in Herat close to the provincial centre, is very well used by several

districts and has easily visible benefits of access to markets to sell agricultural products. But such information is not routinely collected and therefore it is impossible to know, overall, whether NABDP is having impact at that level. There is also emphasis on the positive anecdotes. These need to be balanced with some deeper qualitative analysis. In interviews conducted with DDA members in Ali-Abad district of Kunduz, people were pleased that the irrigation related infrastructure had resulted in the price of 7 Kgs of wheat decreasing from 300 to 180 Afghanis because of the increase in supply. Though this is beneficial for those buying wheat, it may have a different impact on farmers if the increase in supply does not exceed the decrease in price.

Even if information was available, there is no baseline from which to measure change. And even if change was happening, it would probably not be sufficient to attribute change to NABDP because there are many factors affecting agricultural output. As each community generally only gets one project, they may experience an increase in yield because of irrigation but they may not be able to store what they produce or market it because of lack of road or market. It was for exactly this kind of challenge that the design was area based. In implementation, this has not been possible for reasons of equity or perceived equity, as discussed later in the report.

Two decisions have therefore reduced impact at the level of agriculture output. One is the decision to allow communities to determine their own needs, even if it conflicts with program objectives. The other is the decision to spread the benefits widely rather than in an area focus.

A related issue is that NABDP has not had a policy for post project maintenance. It has been considered to be the responsibility of the implementing DDAs or CDCs to maintain but there has been no assessment to determine whether the resources were available, or could be attracted. For projects contracted to private sector companies there is no provision. This has undermined the sustainability of the infrastructures built.

The potential clearly exists to work along the whole value chain. In some cases, now people have more produce, they have become aware that the limitation to marketing it is a storage facility. Staff on NABDP is well aware of the weakness of NABDP and understand that many of the projects they have supported have limited effectiveness. Projects such as canal cleaning, *Kariz* cleaning, intake cleaning, and dam cleaning are considered to be simple on-farm jobs that people can do themselves. Building small scale culverts, retaining walls and gravel roads also have limited effectiveness. But staff on the project seem so committed to the philosophy of community development, as introduced by NSP, that they do not see a contradiction between this and effectiveness or impact.

At the same time, there is an assumption underpinning NABDP that rural infrastructure will automatically bring benefits because people would only request something that relates to their livelihoods which, in rural areas, is almost exclusively farming or agricultural labouring. This assumption, combined with high pressure of work, has meant that the focus of Phase 3 has, like the two previous phases, continued to address immediate priority needs rather than strategic development.

NABDP alone could not make a sustainable impact on agriculture. Farmers need access to knowledge, improved seeds and fertilizers, agriculture machinery, and strategic production and marketing of products. This needs national level government policy, some of which exists but is not yet implemented at the level of the district. There also needs to be other forms of support available

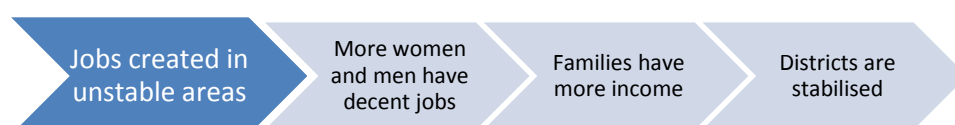
to communities. During interviews in the north east it was clear that the capacity of the DDAs had increased as a result of members' long term involvement with other large development programs such as that of the Aga Khan Foundation. These synergies were clearly important and valued.

Access to diversified food at household level

The longer term intended outcome of the rural infrastructure component is diversified food at household level. This was never a realisable outcome for NABDP. Although *some* communities have *some* access to *some* infrastructure it is nowhere near enough to meet need and demand. Then, because only a portion of infrastructure is oriented to agriculture, any increases in output would be small. In the absence of leadership from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), NABDP's important outputs are not coordinated to any greater goal of impact at household level. Consequently, there has not been, and probably could not have been, any impact on the ultimate goal of reducing poverty and vulnerability.

2.3 Results of job creation

An important component of NABDP is to trial new approaches to working in unstable areas. The logic of creating jobs is that more women and men will have decent³ jobs, which will provide families with greater income, which will contribute to stabilisation of their districts.



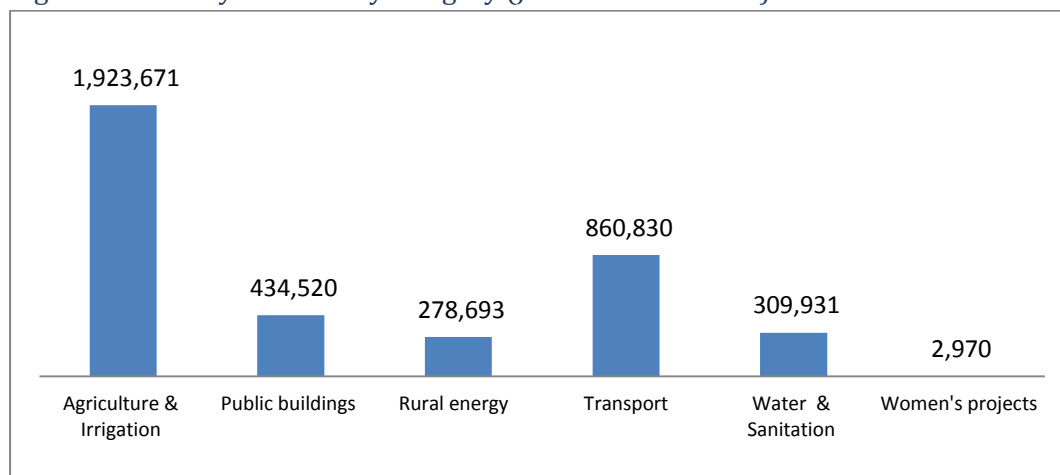
Opportunities for decent work and income

Between early 2010 to the end of 2013, 3,807,645 labour days were created. About half of these (1923, 671) were created through the infrastructures projects for irrigation and agriculture as described in the previous section. Of these, the vast majority provided temporary employment as a beneficial side effect of implementing the infrastructure project and very few were designed to offer sustainable opportunities. The exception is MHP which provides two long term jobs in operation and maintenance. It is possible that some men gain construction related skills which they can then use in the private market. This would only be likely where employment lasted longer, owing to the time required to develop competence in the skilled trades.

Most of the employment created, being in construction, is for men with projects for women creating only 2,970 labour days or 0.08% of the total. Fig 6 shows the proportion of labour days by sector.

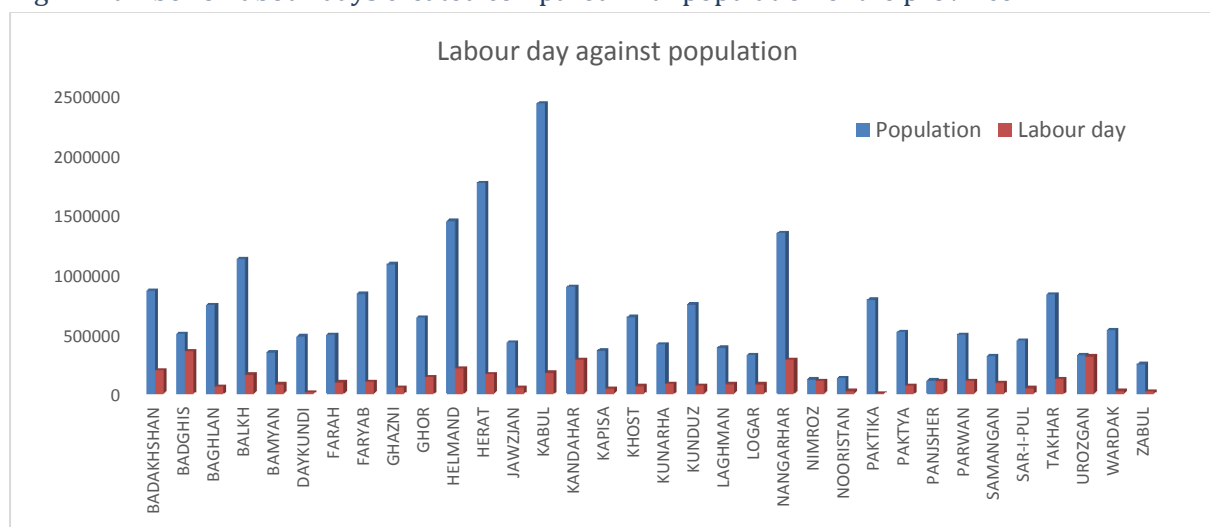
³ The ILO definition of decent work is that it is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men

Fig. 6: Labour days created by category (Jan-2010-Dec 2013)



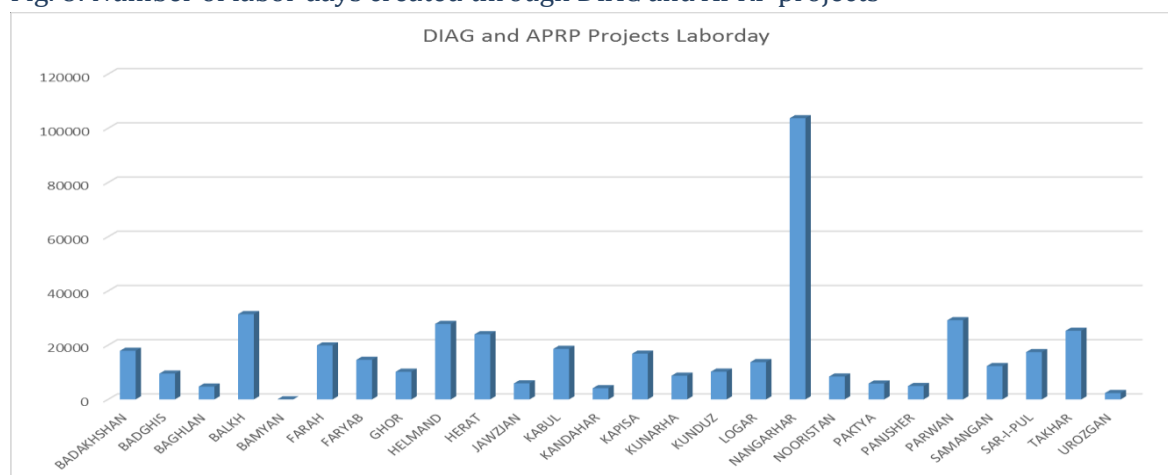
The distribution of labour is not equal across provinces. Fig 7 (below) shows the number of labour days created relative to the population of the province. The largest number of jobs is created in Uruzgan, Badghis, Nangrahar and Kandahar. This was relatively far more beneficial in Uruzgan and Badghis, where the population is small. Conversely, provinces with large populations, such as Kabul, Herat, Helmand and Balkh had relatively few jobs.

Fig. 7: Number of labour days created compared with population of the province



NABDP has implemented projects on behalf of the Afghanistan Peace and Reconciliation Program (APRP) as well as Disarmament of Illegal Armed groups (DIAG) and Integrated Alternative Livelihood Program (IALG). The projects were similar to those carried out in the rest of NABDP as they were selected by the communities, the main difference being that ex combatants were employed in their implementation. Monitoring of the results of the projects is done by APRP so NABDP data stops at the point of output ie the number of people employed. This is shown below in fig 10. By far the greatest benefit is in Nangrahar. Other provinces with high numbers of labour days are relatively safe provinces. This appears to reflect the greater ease of attracting combatants where they are in smaller pockets rather than huge numbers.

Fig. 8: Number of labor days created through DIAG and APRP projects



It is impossible to evaluate this component of NABDP. In part this is because data on outcomes is collected by the main project (APRP, DIAG, IALG), not by NABDP. But it is also because the separation between rural infrastructure projects and employment creation is artificial. Jobs have been created as a consequence of project implementation, not as an end in themselves. As almost all jobs are temporary, and of short duration, they may have raised family income in the short term, and that may have been beneficial for families, but few jobs would fit into the category of 'decent', in terms of resulting in a sustainable livelihood.

2.4 Results on gender equity

The aim of NABDP was to create an enabling environment for the participation of women. This has been implemented in two streams: the involvement of women in the DDAs and separate projects for women.

As described above, to some extent there is an enabling environment in DDAs. Gender equity forms part of the sensitisation training provided to both women and men, and there is a requirement that at least 30 percent of DDA members should be women. Initially this was 50 percent but it proved impossible to reach in most districts. Sex disaggregated data is maintained in the MIS. Annex 2 shows women's participation in the DDAs.

Those women interviewed by the evaluation team were well able to participate and it was clear that they are very committed to helping their communities. In Enjeel, all women were teachers. In Kunduz and the north eastern provinces, the four women who presented for interview included two young women who said they had been selected because of their education. As a measure of the aspirations of young people, one of them said the greatest need in her district was for internet access so that study would be much easier.

In 2011, for the DDA First National Conference a Rapid Survey on Perceptions and Performance was conducted by the Afghanistan Institute for Rural Development (AIRD). This showed that the performance of female members of the DDAs was rated as good by 67% of respondents. Of those attending the conference, many showed high levels of capacity for leadership roles. However, when asked whether DDAs give special consideration to for the needs of women in their DDPs, 90% said that they did not. It has not been easy to improve on this because NABDP resources are not

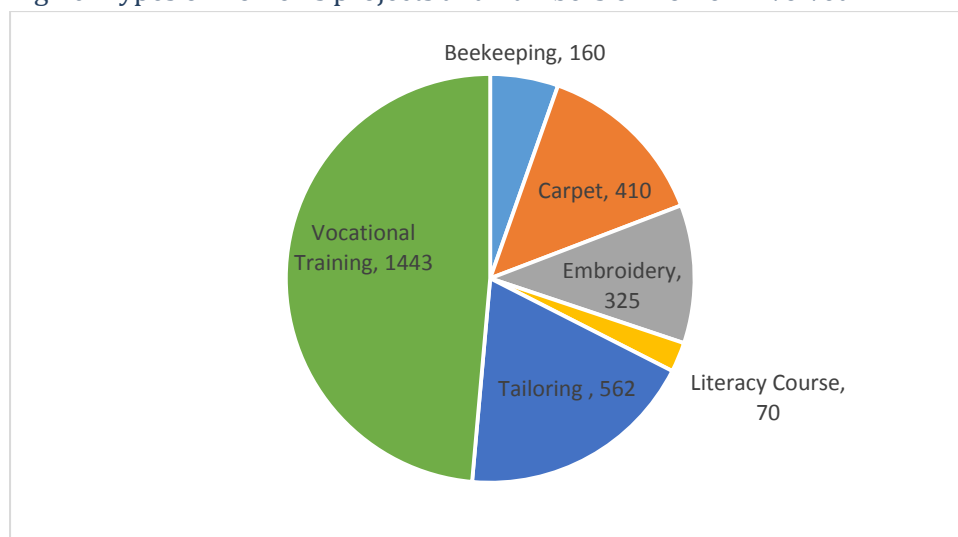
adequate. Because there are only a small proportion of women, their inputs, whilst important, are also necessarily small.

Women do not appear to have been deliberately included in the mainstream construction-related projects. Rather, there seems to have been an assumption that the whole community would benefit, without analysis of the differential impact on women and men. Instead, NABDP has implemented separate projects for women, managed through the freestanding Gender Unit since 2009.

Part of the reason for undertaking separate projects for women was to attract them to participate in the DDAs. Without a particular incentive, many women see no value in the DDA. Until 2013 there was no specific budget for women but Japan then committed \$1 million.

Fig 10 shows the types of projects undertaken by women. At the level of the individual, some of these projects are likely to have impact and annual reports cite some success stories. However, at the level of community, the impact will be negligible because the numbers of women reached is very small. In 2012 and 2013 there were only around 30 projects each year in 16 out of 34 provinces. In western region, for example, there were projects in in carpet weaving, embroidery, tailoring and saffron cultivation but these reached only three districts out of 17 in Herat and two districts of ten in Ghor. These reached a total of 150 women in across two provinces with a total population of more than two million. In Kunduz there have been only two projects for women. The PRRD Director in Kunduz requested more projects for women and mentioned that, as the gender focal point, he was embarrassed that he had nothing to report. In almost half provinces have not had any projects for women.

Fig 10: Types of women's projects and numbers of women involved



2.5 Factors affecting achievement of results

The main factors contributing to success of NABDP are the commitment of staff, especially at regional and provincial level; ownership by the PRDDs; and the availability of funds.

Although NABDP is a separate project, implemented by contract staff, it is fully owned by MRRD and most provincial directors strongly support it. Where there is space in the PRRD office, NABDP is co-housed and this allows easy collaboration. Staff of NABDP provides ongoing support to PRRD offices, especially in aspects such as technical design and monitoring. Because NABDP is a flexible project structure, sharing of resources across other projects has been easy and appreciated.

Availability of funds is, by far, the main factor contributing to success (Annex 3). Where provinces have high allocations – such as Kandahar, Badghis, Uruzgan and Nangarhar – more projects have been implemented of higher value, even allowing for higher costs in insecure provinces. The other important indication of unmet need is the large pipeline of projects which have been designed but which are unlikely to be implemented because there are no funds available.

There are two main factors limiting achievement. Because of MRRD policy to try to give resources to all provinces and districts, projects are spread very thinly. In Daikundi, Zabul, Paktika, Wardak and Nuristan, less than \$666,000 has been allocated. Most of these are also small scale projects likely to have only local rather than district level impact. The choice to spread projects thinly has contributed to NABDP's inability to pursue an area-based approach. Even in provinces with high allocations, there has been little concentration of projects with the objective of realising synergies and greater gains. This is largely because there are still so many unmet immediate needs. Therefore, the assumption of Phase 3 design, that an area-based approach would be possible, has proved false and the quick impact approach of Phase 1 and 2 is still in operation. This is a complicated issue, with many variables, which are beyond the scope of this evaluation to explore.

2.6 Efficiency

It was not possible to undertake a full assessment of efficiency. Within the scope of the evaluation the following points are considered important.

Factors positively influencing efficiency

NIM is a highly efficient mechanism and there are huge advantages of MRRD implementation. In particular, it has been possible to establish DDAs even in insecure areas because staffs are able to have low profile access to communities. Where they cannot access directly, they have set up alternative monitoring mechanisms, which are also facilitated by the low profile. This would be impossible under UNDP security restrictions. NIM also has strength of ownership under NIM which results in better coordination with other MRRD projects. The flexibility of NIM is unparalleled in the ministry and, whilst this has led to some unplanned growth, it has been highly beneficial in enabling MRRD to meet broader ministry or other project needs. In turn, this flexibility increases ownership. This is not to argue that NIM is wholly efficient, as there are various weaknesses. But, on balance, the advantages of NIM far outweigh the disadvantages.

The other main advantage of NIM is that it appears to be cost-effective. At the level of beneficiaries, most of the projects appear to be cheap and of good quality. This is a source of pride for both DDAs and NABDP staff so, even if it cannot be substantiated, the perception that communities get value for money is an important indicator of both effectiveness and efficiency. In the experience of the team, NABDP efficiency compares favourably with NGOs and very favourably with private contractors.

Satisfaction with private sector companies implementing projects is mixed. In some cases there is recognition that a project is too technically complicated for a DDA to implement as well as satisfaction with the end product. In other cases there is profound dissatisfaction with the quality, especially where the project is never completed. The difference seems to depend on whether trustworthy companies bid or not. In provinces where there are many contractors, costs are reliably estimated and the work can be completed in a timely way with proper supervision, either by DDAs or NABDP staff. In the insecure provinces or districts, few companies are willing to bid and they often do not assess the site before bidding. This leads to under-budgeting and, because there is little flexibility in the MRRD procurement system, failure to complete.

Factors reducing efficiency

Several factors reduce efficiency, with the two major ones being donor earmarking and petitions by MPs.

Earmarking

During the last decade, most donors have allocated funds based on a mix of political, security and development criteria. This has led to well documented inequities and imbalance across provinces, especially in relation to PRTs where funds have been determined by availability rather than based on the population size or level of poverty. The distortions in NABDP are therefore no different from the picture across other projects funded by donors. Annex 4 shows the distribution of funds by province and by population. Some of the figures are extracted in the table below to give an indication of variation.

Province	Kabul	Herat	Helmand	Nangarhar	Balkh	Ghazni	Kandahar	Badghis	Daikundi	Uruzgan
Population	2.4m	1.7m	1.4m	1.3m	1.1m	1m	900,000	499,000	477,000	320,000
Funds	\$6.1m	\$4.6m	\$6.2m	\$8.7m	4.5m	1.4m	\$9m	\$11.2m	\$288,000	\$10.1m
\$ capita	\$2.5	\$2.7	\$4.3	\$6.7	\$4	\$1.4	\$10	\$22.4	60 cents	\$31.6

Provinces receiving very high levels of earmarked funds, both absolutely and related to population size are Uruzgan (Australia) with \$31 per person and Badghis (Spain) with \$22 per person. Daikundi, with a population size between the two, receives only 60 cents per capita. The more populous provinces of Kabul, Herat and Ghazni have between \$1.3 and \$3 per person compared with Kandahar (Canada), Nangarhar (US), and Helmand (UK) at \$4.5 to \$10.

In terms of efficiency, these disparities are exacerbated because the highest concentration of funds is in the most insecure provinces where costs are much higher and value for money is less. There is insufficient data to assess whether the benefits in terms of promoting stability outweigh the costs.

Petitions

The system of awarding projects through petitions by Members of Parliament and influential strongmen has become increasingly unmanageable during Phase 3. When petitions are made to the Minister, promises are made that the request will be assessed. Some are refused because they are not feasible either technically or financially, or because they benefit the petitioner personally. But the majority of projects are designed and are placed in the District Development Plan. This provides short term satisfaction for the petitioner but it eventually becomes frustrating when the project is not implemented.

Overall, there are far more projects designed by NABDP than can possibly be implemented with available funds. This becomes particularly problematic because there is no system for rational prioritisation and planning so decisions can easily be contested. In terms of NABDP efficiency, it is a very costly waste of engineers' time and detracts from their ability to do monitoring. All these factors potentially aggravate conflict in an environment where the objective is to reduce it.

Various other factors impact on efficiency. The process for project approval is centralised in Kabul which makes things slower than should be possible and contributes to underspend. The centralised procurement system seems to be working well overall but results in some local dissatisfaction over cost, quality and completion in insecure and remote areas where few companies bid and where the system to check company history is under-developed.

During 2010-12, decisions were made in both MRRD and UNDP that led to project funds being used for political purposes as well as for a wider range of MRRD functions than may have been desirable. On the positive side, NABDP has recovered well and has addressed most of the irregularities through functional review and audit.

NABDP is a project operating in parallel to the structure of MRRD. It is no different from the other large projects, or from other ministries, in paying high contract salaries. This improves effectiveness. However, it weakens efficiency and is unsustainable. The issue of the parallel civil service is well but can only be addressed across the whole of government.

2.7 Impact

Poverty Reduction

Evaluating impact is beyond the scope of this evaluation, mainly because there is no baseline to measure against and the resources committed to the evaluation are not sufficient.

Individual projects implemented by NABDP may have reduced individual and household poverty, at least in the short term, although we cannot conclude this because the kind of data that would provide evidence has not been collected. But, overall, the impact on poverty would likely have been small, unfocused and of questionable sustainability.

If poverty across Afghanistan had reduced during this period, we might conclude that NABDP had made a contribution. However, the most recent data⁴ shows that, in spite of significant improvements in some areas of development, such as education, health and access to safe drinking water, the indicators for food security and poverty show stagnation or even deterioration reduction.

NABDP was designed on the assumption that the three streams – DDAs, infrastructure and jobs - would automatically contribute to poverty reduction. This assumption has been carried into implementation and determination of need has been done at local level by local communities. For this reason, there has been no overarching planning that has taken account of indices of poverty.

⁴ National Risk & Vulnerability Assessment, 2011-12. Central Statistics Organisation, Govt of Afghanistan

Equity

NABDP has sought to achieve equity in line with MRRD policy of ‘some for all, not all for some’. It is not clear exactly what this mean although, by default, we can assume that the definition of equity is equal distribution of the shares of a project. NABDP has not been able to do this because most donors, especially the larger ones, have earmarked their contribution in line with the location of their Provincial Reconstruction Teams. This has greatly distorted the allocation of funds with the concentration of resources not following rational indicators such as population size or level of poverty. This can be seen pictorially in Annex 4. If we were to map this information (very roughly) in relation to poverty, we would see that two of the four major recipients (Uruzgan and Kandahar) have poverty rates of 37% and 23%.⁵ In contrast, Daikundi (43%), Zabul (37%), Wardak 41%) and Nuristan (25%) less than 10% of the amount of funds for similar indices.

Given that allocation of funds by donors is political, MRRD cannot achieve geographical equity in the face of earmarking. If poverty reduction was the objective, it would have been important to plan a distribution of resources according to poverty indices. However, it is clear that UNDP, MRRD and donors have different objectives and only UNDP has, in theory, placed poverty reduction as a central objective. In practice, MRRD and donors have had different objectives based on their political priorities.

Therefore, the concept of an area-based approach has neither been intentionally designed nor realised in the face of competing objectives. With resources spread so thinly across many provinces, and with planning being dominated by petitions, the result may actually, in a small way, contribute to widening inequity.

In terms of gender equity, there has been strong promotion in the establishment of DDAs and the impact, if it was possible to assess, would most likely coincide with the status of women in provinces and districts. The separate projects for women, oriented to livelihoods are far too small to have impact on scale.

2.8 Sustainability

Like impact, sustainability is difficult to assess in a small evaluation such as this. The aspect that stands out as potentially sustainable is the momentum created for local level governance. The DDAs themselves are not sustainable in the face of changed subnational governance policy. But some of them have proved that representative district level governance can increase development effectiveness. Although there have been many challenges in establishing DDAs, those that have access to funding have demonstrated that they can deliver infrastructure that people want, at a cost and quality that they are happy with. The most capable of the DDAs are likely to become the new District Coordinating Committees (DCCs) under a just-commencing process done jointly by IDLG and MRRD.

However, just as capacity takes time to develop, sustainability takes time to achieve and only the best of the DDAs will be able to continue without further inputs or support. The averagely-performing DDAs would still need considerable support and, even then, might not become

⁵ Using World bank/NRVA data: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1328913542665/8436738-1340096876009/StatPlanet.html> This data is not current but is unlikely to have changed significantly

sustainable. Without resources to implement or oversee, the motivation that DDAs have had is likely to evaporate. Even if the DDAs do not survive the transition to DCCs, there will still be some residual impact on the capacity and attitude of the individuals. As the same individuals tend to be prominent in other decision making forums, they are likely to continue to have a positive effect.

Whilst there can be a degree of optimism about the impact of NABDP it is also important to benchmark it. This is possible in relation to NSP, on which NABDP is dependent because it uses CDCs. The rigorous impact evaluation of the National Solidarity Program⁶ in 2013 is relevant because NSP delivers through the CDCs, members of which form the foundation of the DDAs. In terms of infrastructure, it found that irrigation projects have no noticeable impact on the ability of land-holding villagers to access sufficient irrigation and that local transportation projects did not impact village-to-district transportation times or the frequency by which male villagers visit the district centre. It did not increase agricultural yields, productivity or harvest sales although there was a fleeting increase at midline in agricultural sales revenue. In terms of economic benefit, it found that NSP has no conclusive impacts on income levels, income regularity, consumption levels, assets, or food security. Overall, it concluded that any impact on welfare was driven by the infusion of block grant resources rather than the completed project.

For CDCs, the finding was that customary leaders affiliate during project implementation but this is not sustained beyond NSP activity. However, NSP does produce a durable increase in the number of meetings held annually by representative assemblies with strong evidence that the provision of local governance services specific to women has enduring effects.

In NABDP there are various factors that work against sustainability. In terms of the infrastructure delivered under NABDP, the lack of provision for operation and maintenance means that some, if not most, will fall into disrepair and become unusable. Gravel roads, in particular, have a short life and often do not survive one change of season before being washed away or returning to the same condition they were in before. Some communities will have the means to afford to maintain their infrastructure but others will not have the finance.

Trying to reach every province has spread resources too thinly for impact and trying to reach the most remote areas is not efficient use of scarce resources. As funds decline, either following the withdrawal of NATO troops or as a result of economic decline in some donor countries, it will not be effective, efficient or sustainable to spread them even more thinly.

The methodology of community development employed in NABDP has only been possible in a parallel project with a huge and expensive staff. Even then, the number of staff employed as community mobilisers is less than is necessary to ensure high quality support to DDAs. A community development methodology would not be sustainable by the tashkeel staff of PRRDs.

Related to all these are the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of results. NABDP, in common with most projects over the last decade, has reported on inputs, outputs and activities but rarely on outcomes. Donors have become increasingly dissatisfied with this and was a concern mentioned by

⁶ *Randomized Impact Evaluation of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme*. Executive summary of the Final report. Beath, Christia and Enikolopov. 2013

the three donors interviewed. In order to attract continuing support it will be necessary to improve significantly on monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

3. Conclusions

3.1 Conclusions by DAC/UNDP criteria

Relevance

NABDP has, in the broad sense, been a relevant program. At the higher level it fits within the ANDS pillar for rural development and within UNDP's objectives for poverty reduction and improved subnational governance. Donors are committed to supporting ANDS and have found NABDP an appropriate mechanism to channel funds through. The promotion of gender equity, in a context in which women's status and participation is much lower than that of men, is relevant to UNDP, MRRD and donors.

At the local level NABDP has been relevant to the needs of communities to the extent that they have been able to express their felt needs through an inclusive facilitated process and have generally been satisfied with the infrastructure provided.

It is possible that NABDP could have been more relevant. This is difficult to evaluate because each stakeholder has a different perspective on what NABDP should be trying to achieve:

- **UNDP** has the objective of poverty reduction and, in theory; the area-based design enabled a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. In practice the intent of the design has not been realised and was probably unrealistic in a context in which most people in rural areas of Afghanistan can be considered poor and in the absence of reliable means of differentiating meaningfully between categories of poverty
- **MRRD** has sought to deliver services according to its *some for all not all for some* principle. It has achieved the most basic level of geographical equity by spreading to all provinces but has been frustrated in its attempt to deliver services according to need by donor earmarking
- **Donors** have had different development, political and security objectives which have been very difficult for NABDP to manage and report on. In effect, each donor agreement is a project within a project, usually taking up some but not all aspects of the project
- **Parliamentarians and strongmen** are not formal stakeholders in NABDP but have exerted considerable influence over the allocation of resources. NABDP has not been able to manage this, with the result that there is no meaningful system of planning linked to budget
- **DDAs** are both stakeholders and beneficiaries, created by and for NABDP but with a status that has been ambiguous and contested
- **Communities** have received benefit from NABDP in terms of tangible infrastructure but it goes only a small way to meeting their needs. In an environment where there are many development actors delivering similar projects, it is not clear whether communities know, or care, that NABDP is a government program

These differences in perception about relevance – whose needs NABDP should meet, and for what purpose - highlight the importance of political economy in determining any kind of resource allocation. In theory the area-based approach is a relatively straightforward concept. In practice the

reality is that, in a country so deeply mired in conflict, it was probably always impossible to implement a project in a way which could be interpreted politically as favouring one area over another. The complexities of ethnicity, tribe, religion and political affiliation complicate and confound all such attempts. Relevance has therefore, and necessarily, been a compromise between competing interests. Ultimately, donors and members of parliament have exercised far more influence over how the shares of NABDP are distributed than MRRD or UNDP.

A proxy indicator of the challenge of delivering a relevant program is the ongoing question of the identity of NABDP – what exactly is it? In Phase 1 the focus was on meeting immediate needs. In the absence of an alternative mechanism, implementation was done through CDCs and NABDP, by backpacking on NSP, did not have a separate identity. In Phase 2, as DDAs were created, a different identity began to emerge but delivery was, and continues to be in Phase 3, still mainly through CDCs. In all phases, and in parallel with NSP, there have been ongoing questions about why MRRD is involved in governance.

In part, these questions arise out of confusion in terminology. Although governance and implementation have distinct definitions, the two have been rolled together in NABDP and neither staff nor DDAs distinguish between the two. On the governance side the issue is addressed with the dismantling of the DDAs and creation of DCCs. On the implementation side, NABDP is left without a mechanism to deliver infrastructure. Whilst the question of the implementation mechanism is mainly related to effectiveness and efficiency, it is a very important question for the design process. Remaining relevant in a changing era is not a theoretical construct and cannot be separated practically from consideration of what is possible in the context.

Another identity issue is whether NABDP is a development project or an early recovery project. The transition has been made in Phase 3 design, with the emphasis on development through an area-based approach. In practice, much of the infrastructure provided is oriented to meeting immediate needs and is not linked to other interventions in agriculture or livelihoods. This means that it could still be classified as early recovery rather than development.

Effectiveness

NABDP has been effective in delivering a vast number of requested and appreciated infrastructure improvements through the mechanism of the DDAs, in line with stated objectives. Its ambition has been greater than its capacity but it has delivered reasonable results against the inputs, activities and targets. Perhaps the most important aspect of effectiveness is that services have been delivered by the government, contributing to the crucial objective of building trust with communities. This contrasts with services delivered by NGOs and private contractors. How far trust has been built cannot be assessed but anecdotal evidence from PRRDs and DDAs indicate that, at least in some provinces, there is a positive relationship. Even if limited, and acknowledging that good relationships often only last for the project duration, it is an important achievement.

The big weakness in NABDP is the absence of an annual planning process that links to the available budget. The problem arose from the policy of equity between provinces and the opening of offices in all provinces, which resulted in inputs being spread very thinly and being hard to manage. In the face of ever increasing project designs, it has neither been possible to prioritise those that are already in the District Development Plans nor to stop adding yet more. This is potentially harmful because of the frustration that arises when promises are made but not delivered on. Although it has

been problematic, the same challenges are faced by all organisations that are trying to deliver large scale programs, especially when they are in expansion mode. So NABDP has not been less effective than competitors and has almost certainly been more effective than some.

The project design emphasised productive infrastructure and was clear about the linkages between infrastructure and agricultural productivity and livelihoods. This intention has not always carried over into implementation. In part this is because of the tension that exists when communities express different types of need, such as a school, that is not productive or a need for a road which may be less directly productive than irrigation works. Presenting communities with a menu of options might have prevented some of this and increased effectiveness in relation to project objectives. As it is, about 60% of infrastructure is estimated to be productive and that, in such a challenging environment, can be considered a good result.

Effectiveness on gender equity has been limited. It has been more effective in establishment of DDAs, where the representation of women is in line with what is possible in the particular context. Gender is a very sensitive issue and the collaboration between male and female staff in the DDA component is an effective way of dealing with the issue as one of gender rather than as one of men and women. In contrast, the projects aimed at women's empowerment have been very few and the number of female staff available to work on them has been tiny. Recognising that it is difficult but not impossible work, effectiveness for women could have been greatly improved with more female staff and more resources allocated. In particular, effectiveness of the infrastructure components might have been more effective had there been an analysis of the relative benefits to women and men and

Efficiency

The NIM implementation modality has been a highly efficient mechanism to promote effective achievement of objectives. It has led to strong MRRD ownership at central and provincial levels and has allowed staff to go about their work safely with a low profile. There are a number of inefficiencies in the way NABDP has been managed, mainly arising from the reach across all provinces and the cost of having so many offices and staff. Use of government systems has been positive although there are inefficiencies related to the centralisation of decision making and procurement, which makes some aspects slower than is desirable. The most significant inefficiencies, which impact strongly on effectiveness, are brought about by donor earmarking and the pressure of petitions. Overall, the advantages of delivering through MRRD far outweigh the disadvantages.

Impact

The design and the implementation methodology are both underpinned by assumptions that a combination of governance mechanism, delivery of infrastructure and creation of jobs is sufficient to impact on poverty. What can be concluded, with reasonable confidence, is that there may have been impact at the very local household or small community level, and that may have been important even if only in the short term. But, across Afghanistan, there has been no reduction in poverty and food insecurity and indicators suggest the situation might even have deteriorated. Therefore, given the spread of interventions, across NABDP as a whole it is unlikely that there has been significant or sustainable impact. What we cannot know is whether, or to what extent, NABDP interventions have prevented deterioration.

For MRRD, effectiveness means ensuring that all provinces are treated equally. This has been achieved to some extent in terms of perceived geographical equity and it has broadly met the political objective. However, real geographical equity has been out of the control of NABDP because of the distorting effect of donor earmarking and spreading resources so thinly has worked against the kind of focused programming that might have had a greater chance of impact. In some provinces, the contribution of NABDP to development is token. In other provinces where NABDP activity is greater, it may still be a small player compared with other development actors and therefore have limited impact.

The design and results chain are based on the assumption that infrastructure brings development benefits through economic growth and livelihoods. Findings from the NSP impact evaluation, and from global research, indicate that this assumption may be false.

Sustainability

All aspects of NABDP have weak sustainability. The DDAs themselves are not sustainable in the face of changed subnational governance policy. But some of them have proved that representative district level governance can increase development effectiveness and the momentum that has been created for local level governance may be sustainable. The sustainability of infrastructure is questionable because, in most cases, there are no arrangements in place for operation and maintenance.

The methodology of community development employed in NABDP has only been possible in a parallel project with a huge and expensive staff. It could neither be implemented nor sustained by the tashkeel staff of provincial departments.

3.2 Learning from NABDP

NABDP has been an interesting project, providing many opportunities for learning. With the design process for the follow on project taking place currently, it is useful to highlight that might improve the quality of the design.

Focus is a political issue

NABDP was supposed to be a focused area-based approach. This has not happened and probably could never have happened because MRRD has to be seen to be delivering in all provinces and all districts. The political credibility and survival of the Minister depends on this and there is enormous political pressure from MPS who petition for their own area. With ongoing political fragility and conflict it would seem to be impossible to take an area focus or to concentrate resources as that would be seen as unfair and subject to accusations of political bias. Any design needs to take account of political economy and needs a facilitated process to ensure that the objectives are understood in the same way and agreed as realistic.

Bottom up planning is not enough to achieve impact

The entire philosophy of NABDP, like NSP, is that development starts from the bottom up. Although this meets the felt needs of communities the approach has limitations in achieving impact. Not all their needs are within the mandate of MRRD and not all are productive or related to livelihoods as is the intention of NABDP. More importantly, if economic development or sustainable livelihoods are

the objective, communities may not have the specialist knowledge or vision to know what is economically viable. It is also clear from research and the NSP impact evaluation that small scale infrastructure does not, by itself, deliver an economic dividend. Therefore, there also needs to be a degree of top down planning by PRRDs and the central ministry. Good planning and prioritization of investments, combined with careful project selection and implementation, can significantly enhance the size and durability of growth and job benefits as well as raising the return on scarce resources. Identification of infrastructure interventions with higher long-term socio-economic benefits can have a significant impact even at relatively modest levels of spending.⁷

MRRD has little impact on agricultural output outside an agricultural plan

The most productive infrastructure is potentially that which is directly oriented to increasing agriculture output. Although there has been coordination with the provincial departments of agriculture (DAIL), it has been mainly with the intention of avoiding duplication of inputs. As DAIL tends not to be active at district level, and runs different types of programs from the centre, there has been little linkage between the two ministries at central level and the departments at provincial level. The infrastructure of NABDP is therefore not planned with the explicit purpose of supporting agricultural growth. This links to the previous lesson about the need to work on top down policy and implementation in order to realise synergies. Future MRRD inputs need to be designed and implemented within the context of a broad agriculture plan and focused more carefully if it is to achieve specific outcomes and impact.

Working close to the provincial centre may have more impact

Although the intention of NABDP is to reach all districts, the reality is that the majority of projects appear to be clustered close to the provincial centre. This is not surprising as a high proportion of the population live there for reasons of security, jobs, education and markets. Therefore, some of the most productive infrastructure may be that closest to the provincial centre. Recognising this, and working in a more focused way on peri-urban areas may be more effective and efficient than trying to reach the most remote areas. Such an approach would be politically unacceptable (focus is political) if stated so directly but might be possible if articulated using a less sensitive rationale.

Establishing and supporting new institutions takes a very long time

Developing the new implementation and governance mechanism of DDAs has taken many years and is not yet complete. In the absence of DDAs in the future, MRRD plans to work with cluster CDCs. These would be more than 4,000 in number compared with 388 DDAs. Experience in NABDP about how long it takes to build capacity, what level of inputs are needed to support local institutions, and for how long before they become sustainable, suggests that it would not be feasible or cost effective to work with clusters. Especially as funds are likely to decrease, it would not be efficient use of resources.

Projects do not develop core capacity

NABDP is one of several parallel project structures sitting in MRRD, using contract staff to implement. Over the years, NABDP has *added* valuable capacity to the PRRDs and has provided a flexible mechanism for capacity sharing across projects. However, it was not designed to purposefully *build* capacity in the tashkeel. As a result, if NABDP closes, none of the staff would be

⁷Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth: Enhancing the Impact of Infrastructure Investment on Growth and Employment. Background note for the G20 prepared by Staff of the World Bank Group, Feb 2014

absorbed within the ministry tashkeel. In a new design it is important to begin to address the issue of parallel structures by building the design around the core departments of the ministry. There were elements of this in phase 3 design but the approach was one of handing over a product to the ministry rather than developing the product from within. This is an important distinction, affecting ownership.

4 Issues, options and recommendations for the future

All stakeholders are aware that NABDP has to change and that the follow-on project will be not resemble a phase 4. This needs to happen for various reasons, the most important being the change in subnational governance policy. As DDAs have been an integral part of the second and third phase of NABDP, without them, there is no implementation mechanism.

Design challenges

There are a number of design challenges:

1. Building on what exists

NABDP has an eleven year history of intention to implement an area-based approach but actually doing something different. What MRRD and the staff of NABDP are comfortable with is delivering rural infrastructure, predominantly through CDCs and using a community development methodology. Change does not come easily and concepts such as economic growth and large scale livelihoods are outside the experience of most of those involved.

Using an institutional development lens, we know that it is important to start from where an organisation actually is. The risk of the new design is that it will start in a different place which is unfamiliar, not well understood, and potentially resisted. Things which would remain the same are the focused approach and an emphasis on livelihoods. The evidence of NABDP suggest that neither of these will happen because they are politically unfeasible or conceptually misunderstood. To introduce an even more complicated livelihoods concept will risk the same misunderstanding and the same default to infrastructure delivery. The big change would be requiring several ministries to collaborate together. This will almost certainly fail. Afghan ministries are still in a state of competition and, like many other countries, have not yet arrived at the point where they can collaborate. Experience in NABDP shows that even collaboration with MAIL was too difficult because the focus of the ministries was very different and the mechanism for collaboration did not exist.

A less risky design would start with infrastructure and focus all efforts on trying to make it more productive. Combined with developing sustainable operation and maintenance arrangements, this would be a huge improvement on NABDP. The model might follow a similar path to micro hydro power, starting as a component but, at the point that it is proving successful, transforming into a separate project in order to take it to scale.

2. Agreeing a realistic, affordable and sustainable implementation mechanism

With the loss of DDAs, this is the single biggest challenge for a new design. Although the 'what' is not straightforward, the 'how' is very complicated. NABDP has almost been acting like an NGO within government. It has tried to do community development, which is not usually a government function, and, where there was no implementation mechanism, it created one for its own purpose. These

have not been wrong, and they have certainly given some positive results. But it has only been possible because donors have been prepared to support the approach at a time when many have plenty of resources. This situation is already changing. If MRRD tries to implement through cluster CDCs it is basically trying to do the same thing all over again, but on a scale that is unmanageable. It would also pin NABDP to NSP at a time when separation is more appropriate. NSP will face its own sustainability challenges.

Two things can potentially change in a new design. One is to give PRRDs a bigger role in planning. With the experience gained over the last decade, many of them are in a position to understand the province well and to plan for rural development without needing to get the ideas from the communities. They would not exclude communities but would develop their own plans and use the DCCs as a consultative mechanism at district level to ensure the plans were broadly supported. This would be a normal government function. It is not, however, straightforward. In the absence of a decentralisation policy, the PRRDs are currently responsible for implementing programs from central level and do not have their own decision making powers. It would require a changing relationship between MRRD and the PRRDs and a form of pilot of how a decentralised relationship might work. A success of NABDP has been its experimentation so evidence suggests that a different kind of experiment would be possible if there was buy-in to the concept.

The second change would be to contract more work to the private sector. Experience in some provinces has been positive and allows larger scale construction which may bring greater benefit. If community mobilisation is required, the contractors could be required to build this component into their bid. Alternatively, contracts could be given to qualified NGOs. A design in which contracting out was a methodology would require less staff and different skills sets and would therefore be more efficient. New mechanisms would not need to be built in for quality control as the PRRDs already have an M&E unit which can be strengthened.

3. Breaking with governance

Perhaps the biggest challenge of a new design is a decision about whether or not to continue with a governance function. The remainder of Phase 3 will be a collaboration between MRRD and IDLG in the capacity assessment and transition of capable DDAs to DCCs. Whilst MRRD and NABDP staff are keen to continue with their 'baby' a number of complications would likely arise. IDLG has less capacity than MRRD and is only piloting in four provinces. If MRRD retains capacity in a follow on project, the temptation will be to continue business as usual. The timeframe for change would likely keep expanding and NABDP Phase 4 would happen by default. This is not desirable. Therefore it is not recommended that governance support be included in the follow on to NABDP because governance is not the mandate of MRRD and focusing on core mandate is important at this time of transition. It might appropriately fit, for UNDP, with support to IDLG.

4. Increasing impact for rural women

Creating separate projects for women has confined them to traditional roles in a small corner of NABDP and isolated them from the far larger program in infrastructure. Their income generating projects are weakly linked to markets and the value chain and so have little impact. Continuing with this kind of approach is therefore not recommended. The number of women's projects is very small and there are not enough staff to ensure quality. Increasing the staff would not be appropriate because it is not the role of government to engage in small scale projects at local level.

More impact is likely to be realised by bringing women into the main stream. Productive rural infrastructure is intended to improve livelihoods for *all* people, increasing their incomes and sustaining productivity in the long term. In a new design, more attention can be given to analysis of women's' role in the value chain and to the establishment of a process by which each infrastructure project can be analysed in terms of the differential impact on men and women. This will enable choices that maximise the contribution of both and increase overall value for families and communities. Genuine economic empowerment often requires both men and women to take on roles that may be outside the traditional gender stereotypes. This is long term work but it is appropriate and feasible, at least in some parts of Afghanistan if not yet in the most conservative areas.

4. Timing

The timing of design is unfortunate, running in parallel with Presidential elections. A change of government is certain and the new government, probably with new ministers, will take time to settle. Designing a program at this time risks not having the buy-in of the new government, either because it predates it or because it happens before it has had chance to be clear on priorities. An option would be to extend NABDP, at least until the end of 2015. On balance the findings of the evaluation suggest that change of any kind is a long, difficult and slow process. If NABDP closes, a great deal would be lost and a new start up would not be effective for a long time. Buying extra time would allow the design to be developed over a longer period with more time to work through the difficult issues and a greater chance of genuine ownership.

5. The role of UNDP

UNDP has had limited oversight of NABDP and has lost opportunities to influence outcomes. This is always a challenge under NIM but, in a system which is politicised and not yet mature, a stronger role for UNDP is recommended. It has provided a good standard of financial oversight but oversight of program in terms of focus and quality has been weak. In part this role needs to be built into the design carefully so that UNDP's role is clear and accepted by MRRD. But NABDP went off track from the design and major problems such as the lack of alignment between planning and budget were beyond the influence of UNDP international staff. Some of the solutions may be quite simple, such as NABDP's own suggestion that the annual plans be approved and then not allowed to be altered. This builds in protection for those who come under political pressure and enables them to resist.

Annexes

Annex 1: Extracts from the Evaluation Plan

Questions as presented in the TOR	What is involved in answering the question	Time
Relevance Evaluate the relevance of the project in the context of UNDP's role as a development actor, the function and mandate of MRRD and the situation in Afghanistan. The latter should take into account the time at which the original design took place as well as the current context Was the initial design of the NABDP intervention relevant at the time of writing and does it remain so?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the evolution of NABDP since its inception Assess how it has responded to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes in Government policy (eg ANDS, NPPs in Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster, National Water & Natural Resource Development Program, Strengthening Local Institutions) changes in UNDP policy (eg Gender & Capacity Development, Sub National Governance) changes in the context (eg insecurity) Consider whether the activities and outputs of Phase III are consistent with the overall goal, intended impacts, and attainment of the objectives Assess the extent to which the objectives of NABDP are still valid in 2014 (in general) Assess which objectives are no longer appropriate in future (owing to policy and strategy change) 	10%
Effectiveness Has NABDP successfully delivered on the results as identified under each of the project outputs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the extent to which the expected results have been achieved Project which are likely to be achieved before conclusion of Phase III in June 2015 Assess how well cross cutting objectives have been incorporated Describe the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives 	50%
Efficiency Assess the efficiency of implementation; cost effectiveness of the methodology as well as whether other methodologies could have provided better value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess whether implementation arrangements enabled timely achievement of results Assess whether oversight and control mechanisms met requirements Assess whether there were alternative implementation arrangements that would have been feasible and better value for money 	10%
Sustainability Has NABDP been implemented in a manner to ensure that results achieved will be sustainable in the longer term?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the extent to which the benefits of NABDP are likely to continue after donor funding ceases Assess the major factors influencing sustainability or non-sustainability 	5%
Impact What are the long term impacts of the intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the quality of the M&E framework in terms of enabling outcomes/impact to be assessed Describe the scope and scale of results, and which have made a real and lasting difference to beneficiaries Assess the positive and negative impact of external factors 	10%
Recommendations Highlight the key lessons learned. Highlight the positive ones as well as where design, implementation and oversight could have been better What would be the key recommendations in regards to the future of NABDP beyond the existing phase?	<p>Lead a facilitated and participatory process with stakeholders to identify key lessons and recommendations for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the focus/core business of a follow on project to NABDP an appropriate implementation methodology for a new phase how the project can strike a balance between delivering results and capacity development, focusing especially on provincial level how can it can improve impact for rural women 	15%

Evaluation Questions and Data Collection Methods

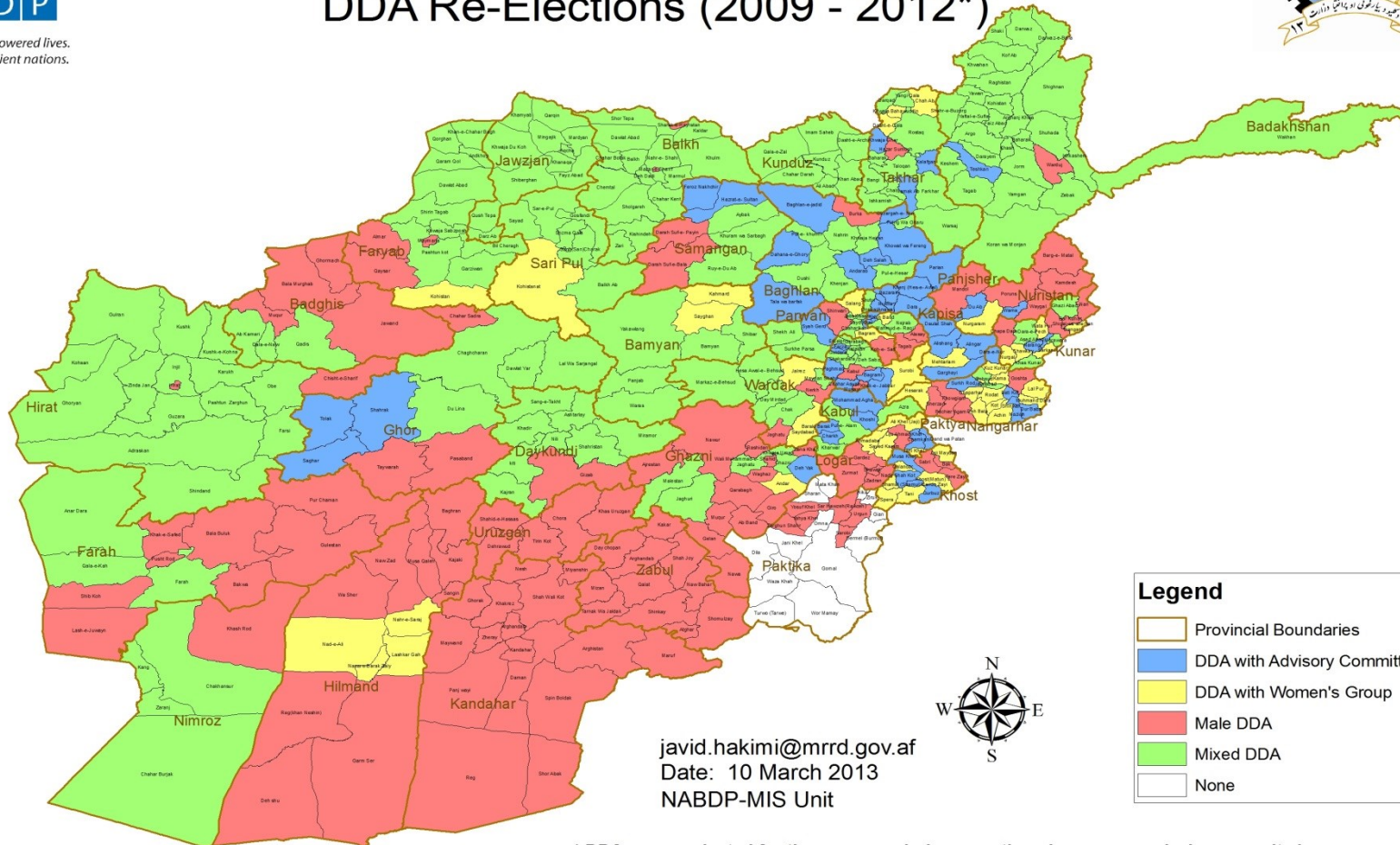
Key evaluation question	Sub Questions	Data collection methods
1. What are the results of NABDP?	<p>1.1 To what extent has NABDP achieved its priority outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do DDAs have improved capacity? Has agricultural output and access to diversified food at household level increased? Do vulnerable people in unstable areas have improved opportunities for decent work and income? Has an enabling environment been created for the equal participation and benefits of women and men? <p>1.2 What are the main factors affecting achievement of results?</p> <p>1.3 Has monitoring demonstrated results and informed decision making?</p> <p>1.4 Have resources been used in the most efficient way?</p>	<p>Documentary analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project document; inception report; annual reports, quarterly reports, MRRD MIS information, project board minutes audit reports, management review, functional review wider evaluative studies: Outcome 6 evaluation; Annual Development Review (ADR), Beneficiary Assessment <p>Key informant interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRRD: Minister; National Project Director (Deputy Minister Programmes); NABDP project managers, staff and advisers; Monitoring Unit staff UNDP: Project Manager, Compliance and Oversight Unit; Strategic Management Support Unit; Cross Practice Unit Provinces: Provincial MRRD Directors; NABDP regional and provincial managers; UNDP Regional Managers; informed NGOs; <p>Focus group discussions (if feasible):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provinces: DDA Chairs, DDA female members
2. What does this mean in the current context?	<p>2.1 How has NABDP responded to changes in government and donor policy?</p> <p>2.2 How sustainable are the benefits?</p> <p>2.3 Does the theory of change remain valid in 2014?</p> <p>2.4 What lessons can we learn?</p>	<p>Documentary analysis: Government subnational governance policies, UNDP policies; Phase I and II project documents and annual/final reports</p> <p>Key informant/group interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP Country Office: Senior Deputy Country Director Programmes, Head of the Sub National Governance Unit MRRD: NABDP, Agriculture and RD Cluster, ERDA staff Donors
3. What are the implications for the future?	<p>3.1 Which aspects of NABDP are appropriate to continue?</p> <p>3.2 How could a future project</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> strike a balance between delivering results and developing capacity at provincial level improve impact for rural women 	<p>Key informant/group interviews, as above</p> <p>Presentation of preliminary findings following first field visit in order to refine questions</p> <p>Presentation of findings at conclusion of fieldwork to ensure recommendations are appropriate and feasible to implement.</p>

Annex 2: Gender in DDAs



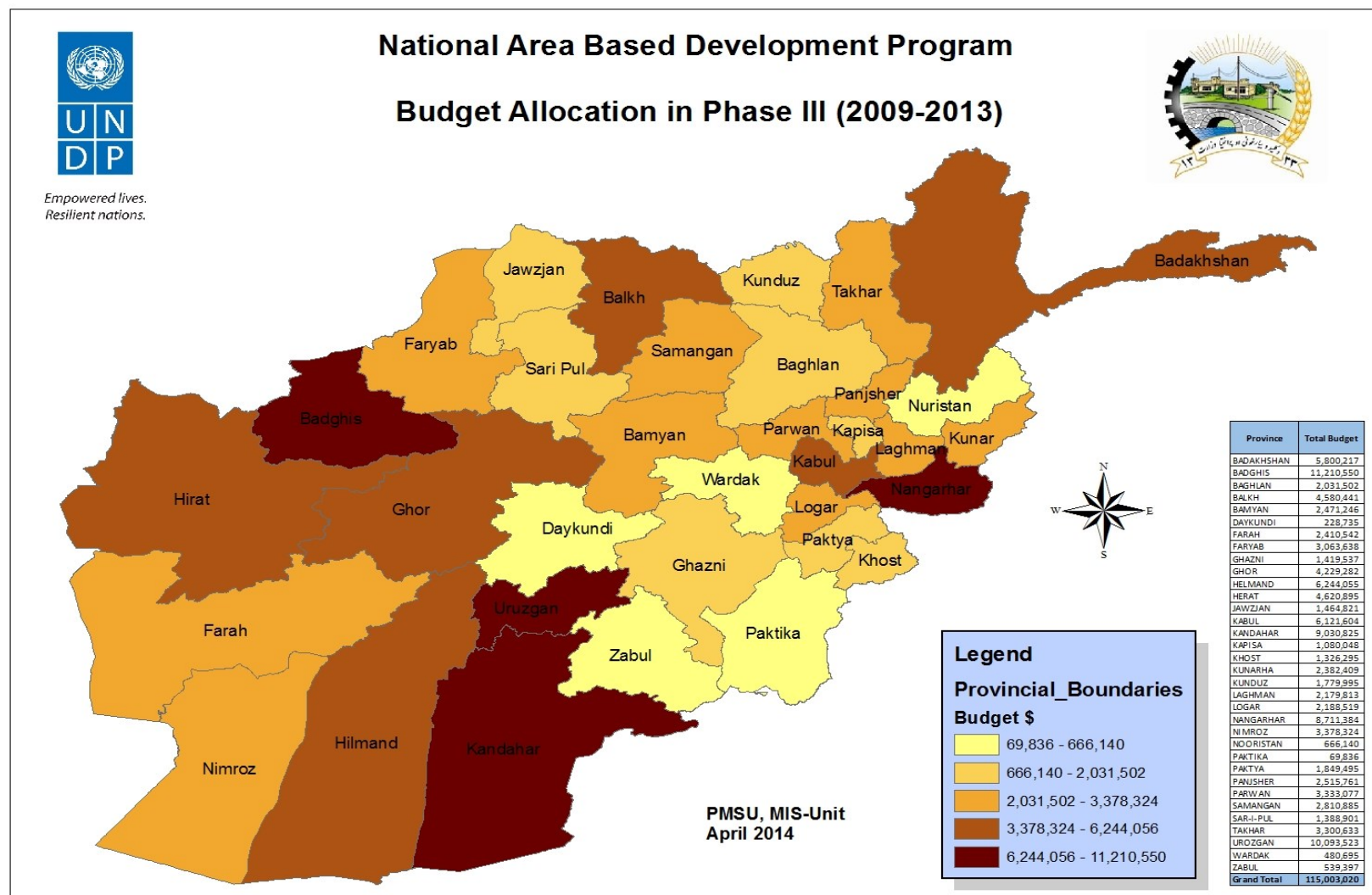
Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

National Area Based Development Programme
Local Institutional Development Department
DDA Re-Elections (2009 - 2012*)



* DDAs are re-elected for three year periods; exceptions have occurred when security issues are present.

Annex 3: Budget allocation across provinces

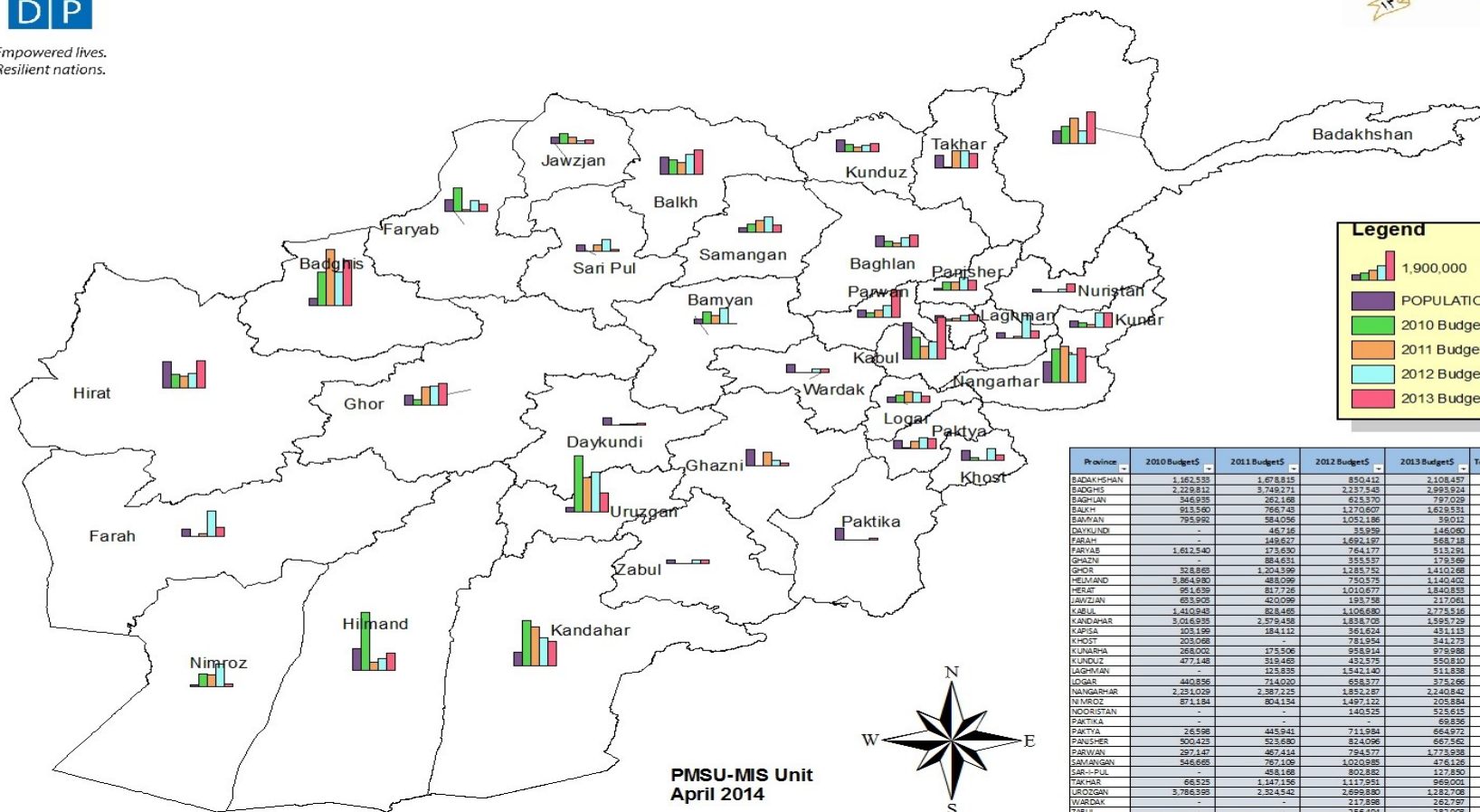


Annex 4: Budget allocation by province (2010-13)



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National Area Based Development Program Phase III- Budget Allocation



PMSU-MIS Unit
April 2014

Province	2010 Budget\$	2011 Budget\$	2012 Budget\$	2013 Budget\$	Total Budget	Population
BADAKHSHAN	1,162,535	1,678,815	850,412	2,108,457	5,800,217	858,901
BADGHIS	2,229,812	3,749,271	2,237,545	2,993,924	11,210,550	499,395
BAGHLAN	346,935	262,168	62,570	797,029	2,051,502	741,710
BALKH	913,560	79,474	1,270,607	1,629,551	4,580,441	1,123,345
BAMYAN	795,992	584,056	1,052,186	59,012	2,471,246	545,892
DAYKUNDI	-	467,146	35,992	146,080	228,735	477,544
FARAH	-	148,677	1,692,197	568,716	2,410,590	499,027
FARYAB	1,612,540	173,630	784,177	515,284	3,065,638	835,724
GHAZNI	-	884,631	355,537	179,569	1,419,737	1,080,843
GHOR	32,869	1,204,599	1,285,752	1,410,288	4,229,162	635,302
HELMAND	5,864,990	488,099	750,375	1,140,460	8,244,025	1,441,765
HERAT	951,639	817,726	1,010,677	1,840,853	4,620,895	1,762,156
JAWZJAN	653,905	420,099	193,758	217,081	1,484,821	426,987
KAPISA	1,410,842	82,846	1,108,680	2,773,516	6,124,064	2,425,085
KANDAHAR	3,016,935	2,579,458	1,857,705	1,595,729	9,050,825	892,300
KAPISA	203,199	184,112	361,624	451,113	1,080,048	358,258
KHOST	203,068	781,954	341,272	1,326,335	2,653,635	658,849
KUNAR	268,002	175,506	979,888	2,385,409	4,110,008	415,008
KUNDUZ	477,148	519,465	452,575	350,830	1,799,995	744,112
LAGHMAN	-	125,835	1,542,140	511,838	2,179,813	382,280
LOGAR	440,856	714,022	698,877	373,286	2,188,519	322,706
NANGARHAR	2,251,029	2,387,225	1,852,287	2,240,842	8,711,384	1,342,514
NIMROZ	871,184	804,134	1,457,122	205,884	3,378,324	117,991
NORISTAN	-	-	1,402,525	523,615	1,926,140	130,861
PAKTIKA	-	-	-	69,836	69,836	784,772
PAKTYA	265,986	445,941	711,954	664,972	1,849,495	514,816
PARVAND	500,423	92,680	667,582	1,515,781	2,676,466	1,09,193
PARWAN	297,147	467,414	794,577	1,773,938	3,333,077	491,870
SAMANGAN	546,669	767,109	1,020,985	476,126	2,810,885	315,211
SAR-I-PUL	458,168	802,882	127,850	1,588,901	3,426,261	442,261
TAKHAR	665,525	1,147,136	1,117,951	999,001	3,930,613	930,315
UZBOGAN	3,786,395	2,524,542	2,699,880	1,282,708	10,093,523	320,589
WARDAK	-	-	217,898	262,787	480,685	529,655
ZABUL	-	-	256,494	256,494	512,988	244,895
Grand Total	27,066,872	25,478,208	31,742,399	30,693,541	115,003,020	23,098,853

Annex 5: List of persons interviewed

List of the individuals/groups consulted when NABDP Evaluation

Name	Title	Organization
Shoaib Timori	ACD, SNGDP	UNDP CO
Mohammad Rasool	Program Officer, NABDP	UNDP CO
Renaud Meyer	Deputy Country Director (Programs)	UNDP CO
Mohammad Tariq Esmati	Deputy Minister, Programs	MRRD
Abdul Raheem Daud Rahimi	Program Manager	NABDP
Sayeed Ahmad Khamosh	General Director, Local Councils	IDLG
Shoaib Khaksari	Deputy Program Manager	NABDP
Said Mahmood Baqiri	Acting Head SMSU	UNDP CO
Iris. A. Hauswirth	Head of Oversight and Compliance	UNDP CO
Sagipa Djusaeva	Gender Specialist	UNDP CO
Sally Anne Vincent, Nigel Bruce	Councillor Development, First Secretary	Australian Embassy
M. Baqir Timori	Program Finance and Budget Analyst	UNDP CO
Sayed Javid Hakimi	MIS Officer	NABDP
Manooj Kumar Khadka	Renewable Energy Specialist	NABDP
Gul Anwar Anwari	Head of Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting Dept	NABDP
Qanbar Ali Zari	Technical M&E Specialist	NABDP
Florida Prevertaylo	Operations Manager	NABDP
Nuha Ahmad	Results Management Specialist	UNDP CO
Simon	Local Governance Unit	European Union
Mohammd Sharif Amiri	Project Manager, Local Governance	European Union
Akifumi Fukuoka	First Secretary,	Japan Embassy
Wali Mohammad Farhodi	Senior Program Manager, Rural Development	European Union
Karin M. Boven	Head Development Cooperation	Netherlands Embassy
Tom Thorogood	Former Chief Technical Adviser	NABDP
Eng.M. Qasim	Regional Manager (Central Region)	NABDP
Muneer Ahmad	Head of PMSU	NABDP
M. DaudAsghar	Regional Manager (East Region)	NABDP
Abdul Malik Ahmadzai	Regional Manager(South Eastern Region)	NABDP
Mohammad Ajmal Hmaraz	Head of PRID Unit	NABDP
Sayed Ghani Kamrani	Project Analyst	NABDP
Humayoon Milad	Senior Program Manager	NABDP
Ihsanullah Husaini	MIS Analyst	NABDP
Abdul Sami Jalalzai	Head of LIDD Unit	NABDP
Shamsul rahman	Chief Engineer, Central Region	NABDP
Sayeed Masood	Senior Monitoring Officer, Central Region	NABDP
Sultan Ali Javid	Head of ERDA	NABDP
Roshan Saf	Project Specialist PMSU	NABDP
Zubaida Mohsen	Technical Specialist (Gender Unit)	NABDP
Maryam Yosufi	Project Associate (Gender Unit)	NABDP
Sayed Fazullah Waheedi	Governor	Herat Province
Gholam Sakhi Alimi	Regional Manager (Western Region)	NAABDP
Asilludin Jami	Deputy Provincial Governor	Office of Governor
Faqir Ahamad Bayangar	Director	DAIL
Mohammad Ayaz Haidarzai	Advisor to Provincial Governor	Office of Governor
Engineer Parwaiz	Technical Specialist	NABDP

Agha Mohammad Sediqi	Director	PRRD
Eng. Mohammad Hanif	Provincial Project Manager	NABDP Ghor
Shokrullah	Provincial Project Manager (A)	NABDP Farah
Eng. Farhad Nyaish	Provincial Project Manager	NABDP Badghis
Said Fazlullah Wahidi	Governor	Herat Province
Mohammad Maroof	DDA Chair	Abkamari District
Mohammad AfzalAfzali	DDA Chair	Moqur District
Noorullah Rafiqyaar	DDA Member	Moqur District
Rayees Sayedal	DDA Chair	Qadis District
Bashir Ahmad Bahadoori	Chair, DDA	Enjeel District
Sayed Ismayel, Daqiq, Jabar, Amina, Sediqa, Saveda, Noor Ahmad Khan	DDA Deputy, Admin./Finance Officer, members	Enjeel District
Abdul Rasool	Social Worker	PRRD
Bashir Ahmad Ghoryani	District Governor	Enjeel District
Abdul Nasir Asoodi	Director	Economic Affairs
Nangyalai Farahi	Head Admin/Finance Unit	NABDP Herat
Khalil Khaliq	Staff, Admin./Finance Unit	NABDP Herat
M. Ibrahim Ihrari	Project Associate	NABDP Herat
Jami	Deputy Governor	Governor Office
Ahmad Zia Ratib	Provincial M&E Analyst	NABDP Herat
Atul Shekhar	Regional Project Manager	ASGP Herat
Feraidoon Danish	Provincial Technical Analyst	NABDP Farah
Haji Haikal, Haji Mohd Sadiq, Haji Seraj, Mohd Hassan	Chair, Deputy, Secretary, Treasurer	Ali Abad DDA
Abdul Saboor	Community Mobilizer	Ali Abad DDA
Eng. Zia Mohammad	Regional Manager (North Eastern Region)	NABDP
Eng. Qasim Amiri	Acting Director	PRRD
Ahmad Naveed	Provincial Project Manager	NABDP Badakhshan
Naqeebullah	Provincial Project Manager	NABDP Baghlan
Mohammad Osman	Member DDA	Rostaq District, Takhar
Mohammad Shah Khan	DDA member	District, Baghlan

Annex 6: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for Evaluation of the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP)

1. Background

The National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) is a joint intervention supported by UNDP and implemented by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD). The project covers the entire territory of Afghanistan and is now in its third phase (June 2009 – June 2015) of implementation. NABDP commenced as a joint initiative of MRRD and UNDP in 2002, with the goal of contributing to a sustainable reduction of poverty and an improvement of livelihoods in rural Afghanistan through a comprehensive area development approach.

The current NABDP Phase-III (2009 – 2015) has a total planned budget of 294 million the majority of which has been mobilized and despite being in the fourth year of implementation there has still not been a programmatic evaluation although there was an Independent Management Review (IMR) in 2010. During this time the project has evolved from a largely international run intervention focusing on specific geographical areas to a nationally led country wide intervention. In addition to the above the context in Afghanistan has also evolved and the current “development” agenda is very much focused upon transition, 2014 and the subsequent transformation process that is envisaged. Given the evolving environment both internally and externally plus that fact NABDP III is nearing its end date of June 2015 the leadership of the project have decided to implement a programmatic evaluation that will inform the planning and design of follow on interventions to NABDP.

2. Purpose

The specific purpose of this assignment is two fold

1. To evaluate the existing programme employing the standard UNDP evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (given that this is a midterm evaluation for sustainability and impact there will have to be estimation). Special emphasis will be placed on Gender within each evaluation criteria.
2. In addition the evaluation team will be asked to provide recommendations/comments with regards to the design of a future follow on intervention once NABDP comes to an end in mid-2015. In this regard the important reference documents will be the UNDP Sub National Governance & Development (SNGD) strategy, Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the National Priority Programs (NPPs) (specifically those that correspond to the Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster components: NPP1. National Water and Natural Resource Development Program and NPP4. Strengthening Local Institutions). Furthermore other cluster strategies that have been developed by the UNDP CO will be important reference documents in particular those related to Gender and Capacity Development. Given the size of the overall task it is recognized that the consultants will have limited time to complete this task and therefore it should involve a greater investment than 10% of the overall mission time.

3. Evaluation Scope and Objectives

The consultants will be responsible for completing the following tasks

- Evaluate the relevance of the project in the context of UNDP's role as a development actor, the function and mandate of MRRD and the situation in Afghanistan. The latter should take into account the time at which the original design took place as well as the current context. This task will be performed based on the original results framework and project document as well as subsequent amendments that were made to these documents.
- To assess the effectiveness of the project in achieving its goals and objectives. This section should examine, but not be limited to, the following
 - the project management
 - the implementation methodology
- To assess the efficiency of the implementation of the project. This aspect should examine the cost effectiveness of the implementation methodology and make a judgment on this issue as well as assessing whether other methodologies could have provided better value for money.
- Make a judgment on the long term sustainability of the different programme activities
- Make a judgment on the potential long term impact of the different programme activities
- To review the oversight role provided by the UNDP Country Office. This aspect of the evaluation should focus upon examining the oversight and control mechanisms that are in place and whether they have been successful in fulfilling this function.
- To highlight the key lessons learned coming out of the programme and highlight both the positive ones as well as areas where design, implementation and oversight could have been better.
- To write up the results of the final evaluation. The format will be agreed upon between the consultant and the UNDP CO during the first week of the mission. The final product will be a detailed report that is submitted to the UNDP Country Office.
- Before the end of the mission present the main findings in regards the evaluation and the design of a future follow on project to a group of the programme stakeholders and respond to initial questions and queries.

In addition to the above based on the findings of the evaluation the consultants will be expected to develop key recommendations in regards the future of NABDP beyond the existing phase. This is a specific task within itself and the exact amount of time given over to it will be clarified in the inception report. However, when performing this task the consultants will be expected to take into account that certain decisions have already been made regarding any future follow on project to NABDP. These are as follows

1. The Energy for the Rural Development of Afghanistan (ERDA) part of NABDP will in future be a separate stand-alone project working with the relevant unit within MRRD

2. A new policy on District Coordination Councils (DCCs) as well as the UNDP strategy clearly spells out that DCCs will be part of the local governance structures of AFG and therefore fall under the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG). For UNDP, this means that DCCs will fall outside of the future UNDP-MRRD project. This has particular relevance to the work that NABDP currently does under output one “Institutions strengthened at the district level to independently address priority local needs”

Note: - During the first week of the mission there will be further discussion on this point.

The consultants will be expected to make recommendations on the following issues

- A recommendation as to what should be the focus/core business of a follow on project to NABDP taking into account the following factors; UNDP’s role and the comparative advantage that it offers; the mandate of MRRD; the transition that is currently underway and the transformation decade that it is anticipated will precede it; and the likelihood of an environment of decreasing donor funding with increased accountability requirements attached to the funds that are disbursed.
- A recommendation on the implementation methodology for a new phase in particular this should look at how the project can strike a balance between delivering results and capacity development of existing MRRD structures at central and more importantly provincial level.
- A recommendation on how any future intervention would address the issue of targeting rural women and developing their capacity to sustain a livelihood given the lessons learned from the current phase.
- Recommendations on the future design coming out of the lessons learned from NABDP

4. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions are as follows

1. Was the initial design of the NABDP intervention relevant at the time of writing and does it remain so today?
2. Has the NABDP been delivered in a cost effective and efficient manner making the best use of the resources available?
3. Has NABDP successfully delivered on the results as identified under each of the project outputs?
4. Has the intervention been implemented in such a manner as to ensure that the results achieved will be sustainable in the longer term?
5. What are the long term impacts of the intervention?
6. What would be the key recommendations in regards to the future of NABDP beyond the existing phase?

5. Deliverables

The deliverables of the mission are comprised of:

- An inception report no later than seven days after the commencement of the mission. The inception report should outline the evaluation team's understanding of what is being evaluated and why, an evaluation matrix outlining which data collection methodologies will be used to address each of the evaluation questions, a proposed schedule of tasks. This inception report will also provide the evaluation team with an opportunity to comment upon the ToR should it be deemed necessary.
- Presentation of preliminary findings including recommendations on the design of any future interventions;
- A draft report for review of all stakeholders;
- A final report approved by the UNDP Country Office;

The mission will be largely based in Kabul relying mainly on secondary data sources and interviews with key personnel. However day trips to the surrounding provinces will be possible and should it be deemed necessary a field trip to one of the regions will be organized. The exact number and location of provinces to be visited will be decided upon during the inception period and will be reflected in the inception report.

6. Methodology

Given the time constraints and large amount of work as well as geographical area that need to be covered the evaluation will be based upon review of documentation and discussion with key stakeholders and staff. This will be complemented with field visits to a selected number of projects sites. It is proposed that the following should make up a basis for the activities of the evaluation team however the final work plan will be developed by the consultants themselves in the course of the first week.

- Review of project documentation and monitoring records as well as the inception and quarterly reports. All programme documentation will be made available including project documentation associated with the previous two phases of NABDP.
- Interviews with the key interlocutors in MRRD including the National Project Director (Deputy Minister Programmes) and the Minister as well as other advisors and key individuals who have been involved with NABDP
- Interviews with key individuals at the UNDP Country Office including the Senior Deputy Country Director Programmes, the head of the Sub National Governance Unit, the Programme Officer, representatives from the Strategic Management Support Unit, representatives from the Compliance and Oversight Unit and representatives from the Cross Practice Unit
- Interviews with a selection of the project donors
- Interviews with key staff in the Programme Management including the Project Manager, CTA, Unit Heads, Regional and Provincial Managers

- Meetings and interviews with direct beneficiaries where possible.
- For each output a review of the results achieved against the targets set as reflected in the Results Framework. (This specific tasks will require further explanation in the work plan and will be based on review of the documents and evidence available, interviews with staff and stakeholders and some specific site visits)
- Based on the findings of the evaluation to develop key recommendations in regards the future of NABDP beyond the existing phase.
- Presentation of draft report and findings with key stakeholders.
- Preparation of the final report

7. Evaluation Ethics

This Evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (UNEG 2008) and the consultants must use measures to ensure compliance with the evaluator code of conduct (e.g. measures to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of their sources, provisions to collect and report data, particularly permissions needed to interview or obtain information about children and young people, provisions to store

8. Time Frame for the Evaluation Process

The estimated time for the conduct of this evaluation is 30 working days and is scheduled to start in early 2014. A tentative time table is outlined below that could be amended in consultation with UNDP.

Item	Schedule / Days
Initial review of documents	3days
Consultations with UNDP and key stakeholders in Kabul	3 days
Inception Report produced	5 days
Comprehensive desk review and through consultations including if time allows one or two field visits to projects.	10 days
Analysis of the information collected and preparation of a draft report	5 days
Debriefing to the project stakeholders (presenting the draft report)	By day 27
Draft shared for comment	By day 27
Incorporating the comments and submission of final report	3 days
Total work days	30 working days

This is a tentative schedule and will be finalized with the team upon their arrival

9. Evaluation Team composition and required competencies

It is envisaged there will be two members in the evaluation team that will be as follows, an international team leader with a strong background in managing evaluations on large rural development projects, and a local Afghan with a background in development/governance. . In addition staff from the project will assist the team in all issues such as arranging logistics and translation where necessary.