

OVERVIEW OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

AFGHANISTAN

Country Context

Afghanistan is a mountainous landlocked country bordered by Iran, Pakistan, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It covers about 647,500 square kilometers. Its capital and largest city is Kabul.

The majority of Afghanistan's 32 million inhabitants are Sunni Muslims, although there is a sizeable Shia Muslim community. Afghanistan has several ethnic groups, the largest being Hazara, Pashtun, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek. More than 40% of the population is under age 15. Dari and Pashto are the country's official languages.

One of two Afghans can be classified as poor. Life expectancy is less than 43 years and the literacy rate is just 28%.¹ One in five children dies before age five, and one woman dies approximately every 30 minutes from pregnancy-related causes. Infant and maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world. Preventable diseases cause 80% of the deaths of children under five. About half of this same age group is physically stunted due to chronic malnutrition, and some 10% suffer acute malnutrition. Only 25% of the population has access to clean drinking water—one in eight children die from lack of the resource.²

Afghanistan is highly dependent on farming and raising livestock. The major food crops produced are corn, rice, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruit, and nuts. The biggest industrial crops are cotton, tobacco, madder, castor beans, and sugar beets. Leading exports include

wool and prized Karakul skins. Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, few of which are currently exploited. The country has numerous mineral and precious stone deposits, as well as natural gas and some oil reserves. In 2007, Afghanistan's poppy fields produced up to 93% of the world's total supply of opium,³ making drug trafficking the biggest income source.⁴

Government

On 9 October 2004, Afghanistan held its first national democratic presidential election. More than 8 million Afghans voted, 41% of them women. Hamid Karzai was inaugurated as President on 7 December 2004.

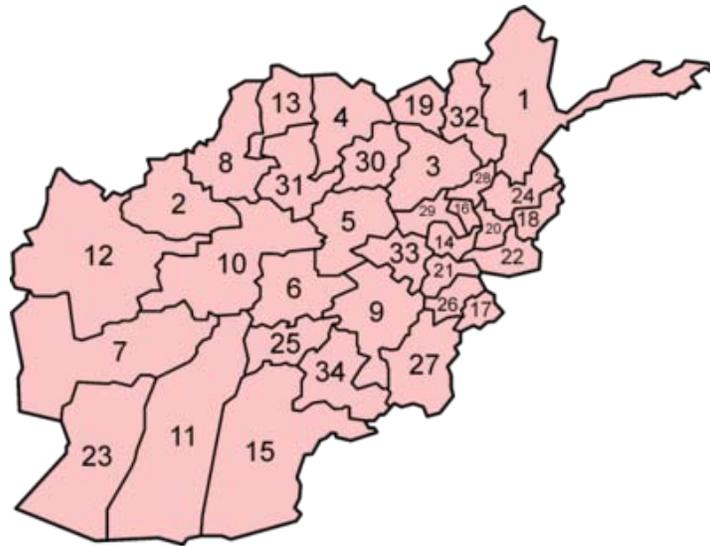
National parliamentary elections were held on 18 September 2005 for the *Wolesi Jirga* (lower house) of Afghanistan's bicameral National Assembly, as well as for the country's 34 provincial councils. About 53% of the 12.5 million registered voters participated in the elections.

The Afghan Constitution provides for the indirect election of the National Assembly's *Meshrano Jirga* (upper house) by the provincial councils and by reserved presidential appointments. The National Assembly was inaugurated on 19 December 2005, thus completing the process of political normalization outlined in the Bonn Agreement following the September 2001 ouster of the former Taliban regime.⁵

Afghanistan is administratively divided into 34 provinces (*velayat*), which are further subdivided into districts.

The 34 provinces are:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Badakhshan | 18. Konar |
| 2. Badghis | 19. Kunduz |
| 3. Baghlan | 20. Laghman |
| 4. Balkh | 21. Lowgar |
| 5. Bamyan | 22. Nangarhar |
| 6. Daykundi | 23. Nimruz |
| 7. Farah | 24. Nurestan |
| 8. Faryab | 25. Oruzgan |
| 9. Ghazni | 26. Paktia |
| 10. Ghowr | 27. Paktika |
| 11. Helmand | 28. Panjshir |
| 12. Herat | 29. Parvan |
| 13. Jowzjan | 30. Samangan |
| 14. Kabul | 31. Sar-e Pol |
| 15. Kandahar | 32. Takhar |
| 16. Kapisa | 33. Vardak |
| 17. Khost | 34. Zabol |



Civil Society in Afghanistan

Civil society means ordinary people and the many ways in which they endeavor to organize and protect themselves in times of peace, war, periods of political repression, or during post-conflict reconstruction. Individuals, families, and communities can all participate in civil society. Its diversity reflects human needs and the cultural, religious, economic, and political practices formulated to address those needs.

In Afghanistan, civil society structures and organizations include Sufi (a brotherhood within Islam) movements and *khanqahs* (buildings designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood); religious institutions such as mosques, *madrassas*, or *takiakhana* (*shi'ite* mosques); water management committees; *shuras* (community councils of elders); cultural circles; artistic and professional associations; and nonprofit or nongovernment assistance organizations. Many of these are ancient structures that continue to form the building blocks of Afghan civil society.

Civil society also is fundamentally important to a functioning democratic process, which includes the right to associate, the right to participate, the right of freedom of thought and expression, and the freedom to practice various branches of Islam.

Civil society organizations with wide-ranging social networks can provide momentum towards achieving these goals which, while extremely challenging in the case of Afghanistan, constitute the foundation of real and sustainable security.

Civil society as a functioning component of a democratic process, however, is still nascent in Afghanistan. Challenges facing the development of more robust civil society institutions—and the protection of Afghans' key right to freedom of expression—are rooted in the still-limited progress made in security sector reform since the country re-engaged with the international community in 2001.

The survival of Afghanistan's people and civil society through years of war, instability, and drought was due as much to the strength of the social fabric—family and community networks and systems—as to any international assistance. Extended families supported each other, *shuras* continued to function, shopkeepers gave credit, and assistance organizations were formed. However, the Afghans' ability to use the opportunity to promote civil society within the context of the democratic changes and reforms engendered by the Bonn Process will depend on an enabling and secure environment.

Individual and institutional civil society representatives played an important role via their extensive networks in developing the Bonn Agreement, in establishing the interim administrations in both the emergency and constitutional *loya jirgas* (grand assembly), in drafting the constitution, and in supporting the presidential and parliamentary election process by providing civic education programs throughout the country.

Today, civil society organizations in Afghanistan support a wide range of activities to nurture the country's continued reconstruction and development.

In addition, nonprofit, nongovernment development assistance organizations have helped develop legislation that regulates nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Human rights organizations are expanding, both in number and in the scope of their work. Newly-established social organizations, ranging from writers' groups to farmers' unions, are talking to each other about shared issues as part of the overall development of Afghan civil society.

NGOs represent the most developed "modern" form of civil society in Afghanistan. For definitional purposes, NGOs in Afghanistan are seen as independent, not-for-profit, civilian organizations engaged in serving the public good in sectors such as education, health, child protection, agriculture, and water supply, and sanitation.

Trends in NGO Activity Since 1979

The past three decades have witnessed several phases of NGO activity in Afghanistan:

1979–1988

Immediately following the Soviet invasion, NGOs began programs to address the food, shelter, and health care needs of Afghan refugees in neighboring Pakistan. In the early 1980s, NGOs initiated cross-border programs into Afghanistan to address the basic health and livelihood needs of Afghans in areas not under Soviet control. Cross-border programs involving education were initiated by 1984, with agricultural and infrastructure projects beginning in 1986. Throughout this period, "cash-for-food" projects provided Afghans in resistance-held areas with resources needed to allow them to remain inside Afghanistan. During the 1980s, many NGOs also worked to raise awareness in western capitals about the plight of Afghan refugees and of Afghans as victims of military aggression.

1988–1995

By the late 1980s, NGOs had begun complementing their emergency assistance with development activities, using development principles in the context of "chronic emergency" and political and security instability. The changed political context and increased resources for Afghanistan in the late 1980s increased the number of Afghan NGOs, with more support for capacity building. In addition, several NGO coordinating bodies were established to strengthen the accountability, standards, and professionalism of the NGO community, and to increase coordination to maximize impact and reduce duplication of activities. During this period, many Afghan NGOs, and thousands of Afghans, built their professional

skills in NGO-led training institutions with support from international NGOs. Coordinated standards were also developed, particularly in health and agriculture.

1996–2001

Despite political restrictions during the period of Taliban control, improved security in many parts of the country enabled agencies to work directly with local communities in remote rural areas. NGOs continued coordinating closely with the United Nations (UN) and development partners to establish programming priorities and agree upon principles for promoting coherent and well-focused assistance to Afghanistan. The efforts of about 20 organizations, mostly NGOs, to develop an improved set of learning standards for Afghan children typified the cooperative approach during this period.

The severe drought from 1997–2001 exacerbated the humanitarian need for many rural communities and forced new waves of displacement into urban areas, internal camps and to refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan. While NGOs expanded their emergency activities to help these populations, they also continued their development programs in-country.

Late 2001–present

The events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent ouster of the Taliban regime, substantially changed the working environment for NGOs in Afghanistan. In 2002, large numbers of refugees from bordering countries returned to Afghanistan, requiring new emergency shelter and feeding programs. NGOs have also sought to balance their emergency response work with longer-term reconstruction and development initiatives. The establishment of an internationally recognized government has provided NGOs with new opportunities to rearticulate the role of humanitarian actors, both as service contractors and as mission-driven civil society organizations.

At the same time, the rapid increase in the number of NGOs and their ability—with donor funding—to pay salaries above those offered by the government has resulted in criticism of NGO activity in some government circles and other parts of Afghan society. Incidences of substandard or overpriced work by NGOs have contributed to the sometimes negative attitudes about NGOs within the country.

Humanitarian Assistance and Development

NGOs played an important role in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, the Mujahideen-led civil wars,

and the Taliban regime. Since 2001, experienced NGOs have considerable institutionalized knowledge of local operational contexts and Afghan social constructs, and also possess humanitarian, development, and technical expertise. NGOs have emphasized capacity building by training teachers, health care workers, and engineers—a vital aspect of the country’s reconstruction and development. This has given many Afghans and Afghan institutions increased capacity in middle and upper management.

Current areas of NGO engagement include the following:

- humanitarian assistance and emergency relief;
- health and nutrition;
- water and sanitation;
- education and vocational training;
- income generation, including job creation and microfinance;
- community development and civil society support;
- governance support including peace building, reconciliation, and civic education;
- rural development, including infrastructure, agriculture, and livestock support;
- urban reconstruction;
- reintegration for returnees, internally displaced persons, and demobilized soldiers; and
- natural resource management.

Very few NGOs in Afghanistan limit their activities to only one sector. Most are involved in a range of activities based on their experience, mission statements, and donor funding.

NGOs coordinate their activities with the Government of Afghanistan, and also play key roles as implementing partners for various government programs, including the National Solidarity Program, the National Rural Access Program, health services delivery, and various education and other initiatives.

Within their mandates, many NGOs operating in Afghanistan also focus on specific, often marginalized, populations that include children, women, people with disabilities, and ethnic or other minorities.

A sample of the variety of international and national NGOs currently working in Afghanistan best illustrates the nature of NGO activities.⁶

ActionAid

ActionAid has worked in Afghanistan since 2002. Its current work focuses on education, governance, food rights, HIV and AIDS, peace building, and women’s rights. Its strategies revolve around grassroots

community mobilization, local capacity building, research, networking, and international advocacy. www.actionaid.org/afghanistan/

Afghanaid

Established in 1983 in the United Kingdom, Afghanaid currently works in four provinces of Afghanistan with more than 500,000 adults and children. It employs 450 mostly Afghan staff, and its work focuses on sustainable rural development strategies, including community development, vocation training, mother and child health projects, microfinance, and infrastructure rehabilitation. www.afghanaid.org.uk/

Afghan Development Association

Established in 1990, the Afghan Development Association is an Afghan-managed NGO implementing reconstruction and development programs focusing on agriculture, construction, and education and training programs. It currently works in 52 districts in Afghanistan and employs about 450 Afghans. www.pcpafg.org/Organizations/ADA/

Aga Khan Development Network

Providing emergency relief in Afghanistan since 1995, the Aga Khan Development Network programs now encompass large scale rural development, health, education, and civil society programs; provide a range of microfinance services; safeguard historic landscapes and neighborhoods in Kabul and Herat; provide a mobile phone network; and support the renovation of a 5-star hotel in Kabul. www.akdn.org/news/AKDN_Afghanistan_010406.pdf

CARE Afghanistan

CARE has worked in Afghanistan since 1961. It has 900 staff members (99% of them Afghan), and works in the central, southern, and southeastern regions with focus on education, water and sanitation, food for war widows, and income generation and skills training for vulnerable groups and demobilized soldiers. www.care.org/newsroom/specialreports/afghanistan/index.asp

Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees

Since 1984, the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees has worked toward sustainable livelihoods for rural Afghans, including support to refugees and returnees, with a focus on rural development initiatives and water and sanitation projects. Its work covers 25 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. It employs 950 Afghans and 20–25 foreign development workers and consultants. www.dacaar.org/dacaar.asp?id=118

International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee has aided Afghans since 1980, and currently supports major programs in protection, reintegration of returnees, emergency infrastructure support (shelter, water, and sanitation), vocational training, education, child protection, health, security, capacity building, and community development. www.theirc.org/where/the_irc_in_afghanistan.html

Islamic Relief Worldwide

Islamic Relief has worked in Afghanistan since 1992, responding to natural disasters and emergencies and running development projects such as water, sanitation, and microcredit schemes. Current activities include work in:

- food security, including partnership projects with UN World Food Programme;
- drought alleviation;
- health;
- education;
- water and sanitation;
- sustainable livelihoods;
- building basic community infrastructure such as a health clinic outside Kabul to serve 40,000 people; and
- income generation projects such as the Kandahar women's bakery and programs for street children in Kabul.

www.islamic-relief.com/

NGO–Government Relations

“NGOs are as damaging for Afghanistan as are warlords.” With this provocative statement in his first public address during the 2005 Afghanistan Development Forum (donor meeting), the then minister of planning, Ramazan Bashar Dost, set the tone for his approach to the NGO sector. In his opinion, NGOs were profiteers that worked solely for their own benefit, wasting money on expensive cars, exorbitant salaries, and high rents.

His public statements seemed to reflect the opinion of many of his colleagues in the government, and to a certain extent the opinion of some segments of Afghanistan's urban population. The rural population's attitude toward NGOs remained much more positive, given that over the last quarter century NGOs have been the main service providers for Afghanistan's impoverished rural population.

As noted previously, the sometimes negative image of NGOs has been reinforced by public frustration at

the slow pace of reconstruction, notwithstanding the large sums of money committed to Afghanistan by international donors. Further, as noted by one NGO staff member, “populist politicians, the media and many in the public tend to lump all aid agencies (including private contractors, UN agencies, private security contractors, and even the NATO-led International Assistance Security Force) into one group and refer to them as ‘NGOs’.”⁷

Another source of difficulty for NGOs was the poor legal framework for NGO activity in Afghanistan. NGOs were governed by the Regulation on the Activities of Domestic and Foreign Nonprofit Organizations in Afghanistan. This regulation did not adequately define NGO activity, leading to confusion about the nature and activities of NGOs in Afghanistan.

To address this problem, the transitional government in August 2002 invited the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) to help prepare a new NGO law through a participatory process. In July 2003, a draft law was submitted to the Ministry of Planning. Unfortunately, the draft law was shelved due to the resignation of the minister of planning, the government's preoccupation with drafting the constitution, and the subsequent appointment of Minister Bashar Dost.

In 2004, the newly-elected Afghan Government made the enactment of a new NGO law one of its priorities, with responsibility given to the minister of economy. A new draft law was issued in February 2005. Following consultations with both NGOs and donors, and with the technical support of ICNL, the new Law on Non Governmental Organizations was signed by President Karzai on 15 June 2005.⁸

Under the new law, all national and international NGOs were required to register with the Ministry of Economy (rather than the Ministry of Planning). This new registration process was intended to screen out organizations that were not truly nongovernment nonprofit organizations or not actually conducting humanitarian or other NGO-sector activities.

As of January 2008, 1,395 NGOs had registered with the Ministry of Economy (1,094 national NGOs, and 301 international NGOs). This is half the number of the organizations that had been registered before the adoption of the new law.⁹

Law on Social Organizations

As described earlier, NGOs are but one of several kinds of civil society organizations. Organizations that are not NGOs as described under the law, or

that want to distance themselves from any remaining negative perception of NGOs, can register as a “social organization” with the Ministry of Justice. Social organizations (communities and associations) are defined as “the voluntary unions of natural persons for ensuring social, cultural, educational, legal, artistic and vocational objectives” (Article 2, Law on Social Organisations). As per Article 16 of the law, the assets of such organizations should be limited to the support of the goals of the organization.

As of November 2006, 461 social organizations had registered with the Ministry of Justice.

NGO Principles, Mandates, and Standards

As part of an ongoing effort to improve the government’s and Afghan public’s understanding of NGO purposes and activities, in May 2005, most NGOs affiliated with the four leading NGO coordinating bodies¹⁰ in Afghanistan developed a “Code of Conduct for NGOs Engaged in Humanitarian Action, Reconstruction, and Development in Afghanistan.”¹¹ The code promotes a set of shared values and establishes high standards of accountability, transparency, and service delivery for its signatories. As per the code:

“Our general mission as NGOs operating in Afghanistan is to address humanitarian, reconstruction, and sustainable development needs in Afghanistan, with a special focus on the rights of those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. We work in partnership with each other, the government, donors, and communities.”

NGOs and Development Funding

From January 2002 to September 2004, \$1.2 billion in foreign assistance was channeled through the government’s development budget, with an additional \$3.1 billion in support of the “external budget.” Of the external budget funding, \$2.0 billion supported activities mounted by UN agencies while \$705 million went to private contractors. The remaining \$413 million was used to support NGO activities in Afghanistan. Thus, NGOs received less than 10% of direct donor funding during this period. Direct grants to NGOs have fallen in recent years, with increased funding provided directly to the government or channeled through multilateral organizations or commercial contractors.

For the Afghan fiscal year 1384 (21 March 2005 to 20 March 2006), more than \$3.2 billion in donor funding was allocated to the government’s development

and external budgets. Again, NGOs received some \$450 million in grants or contracts, representing about 13% of total donor assistance to Afghanistan during the year.

With stagnant flows from donor sources, NGOs in Afghanistan currently receive the bulk of their funding through contracts for the delivery of national programs, such as the National Solidarity Program. However, these contracts tend to be insecure, in part because of the long time it takes donors to provide promised financing. Such contracts are also often very rigid, allowing little space for flexibility or innovation and relegating NGOs to a contractor-type role.

NGO Structure and Networks

NGOs have different organizational structures that reflect vertical and horizontal hierarchies. Many NGOs have headquarters in Kabul or regional and/or provincial centers, with many also maintaining small field offices in their particular areas of operation.

Several NGO coordinating bodies and civil society forums operate in the country. These include the following:

■ Afghan NGOs Coordinating Bureau

The Afghan NGOs Coordinating Bureau (ANCB) aims to coordinate the activities of Afghan national NGOs and to increase their capacity. ANCB also represents the interests of Afghan NGOs to the government and the development assistance community, with the objective of developing a better partnership for strengthening the country’s rehabilitation and development. ANCB was founded in 1991 to address the specific needs of Afghan NGOs. At present, 180 NGOs are registered with ANCB, some of which are also members of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR).

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ancb@ancb.org
www.ancb.org

■ Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief

The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) facilitates coordination among NGOs; acts as a conduit for information between the UN, national and international NGOs, development partners, the government, and other stakeholders; and offers a platform for advocacy.

NGOs created ACBAR in 1988 in response to the need for improved coordination, transparency, and accountability among NGOs in Afghanistan. ACBAR has 94 international and national NGO members.

House 69, Charah-ye-Shaheed (Across from the Shaheed tomb), Kabul
Tel +93 0 7027 6464
anja@acbar.org
www.acbar.org

■ **Afghan Women's Network**

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is a network of women's NGOs and individuals promoting the empowerment of Afghan women. It is active in three main areas: capacity building, networking, and advocacy.

The idea for AWN came about when participants at the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, People's Republic of China, identified the need for more unity and cooperation among women in Afghanistan and the Afghan diaspora. The network became a formal structure in 1996 composed of NGOs that focus primarily on humanitarian assistance, literacy, and education. At present, 72 NGOs are registered with AWN.

House 93, Street 3, Qalai Fatullah, Kabul
Tel +93 020 220 0691
awnkabul_q@yahoo.com
www.afghanwomensnetwork.org

■ **South and West Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination**

The South and West Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC) is an NGO coordinating body for Afghan NGOs working in the country's southern region. It was founded in September 1988 by 12 NGOs undertaking relief and rehabilitation work with Afghan refugees in Balochistan and inside Afghanistan. SWABAC has currently 40 members.

House 12, Shar-e-Naw, Kaul Shar (Near Pataw Canal, behind Kandahar Hotel), Kandahar
swabac@hotmail.com

■ **Afghan Civil Society Forum**

The Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) is an informal network of civil society groups that provides a platform for dialogue and aims to develop a role for civil society in political decision making. ACSF was established at the Afghan Civil Society Conference, held in parallel to the Bonn conference in late 2001. The Swiss Peace Foundation (Swisspeace) supported the establishment and operation of ACSF at the request of Afghan civil society leaders. In 2004, Swisspeace handed over the management of ACSF to Afghan actors.

This broad network, which is made up of approximately 80 organizations, includes traditional structures such as shuras, members of the private sector, youth groups, and individuals.

Sharara Watt (Across from Malalai Maternity Hospital, Kabul)
Tel +93 0 7027 7284
azizrr@acsf.af
www.acsf.org

■ **Foundation for Culture and Civil Society**

An independent social organization, the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society was established in March 2003 by a group of Afghans concerned with the fate of Afghan culture and the strengthening of Afghan civil society. The foundation's main objective is to become a focal point for all activities promoting modern Afghan culture and the strengthening of civil society. It is a motor for national development within the framework of the peace process and national reconstruction efforts, and a bridge to the rest of the artistic and intellectual communities in Afghanistan.

Salang Watt (In front of the National Archives, Kabul)
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NGO Directories

Each year, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit publishes *The A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance*. The guide aims to ensure a shared vocabulary and common understanding of the forces at play by providing a glossary of assistance terms, an overview of Afghanistan's system of government, a series of locator maps, key primary documents, web links, and an extensive contact directory. It is available at www.areu.org.af.

ACBAR issues a directory of more than 500 contact details for national and international NGOs, ministries, UN agencies, and diplomatic missions. The directory is revised quarterly and made available on ACBAR's website at www.acbar.org. An electronic copy is also available on request.

NGOs and Security

As with all reconstruction and development stakeholders in Afghanistan, NGOs' ability to operate depends on a reasonably secure environment. As NGOs are voluntary, independent, and community-focused organizations that are often locally staffed, their security needs and concerns are similar to those of the communities they support and work with. Therefore, NGO security concerns are not limited to anti-government elements—they also include crime, local conflicts, corruption, and

war-related incidents. NGOs are adversely affected by the absence of the rule of law, continuing impunity, and lack of access to criminal justice. These constraints exist in many areas of the country and can greatly limit the ability of NGOs to function.

Afghanistan is one of the most dangerous places in the world for aid agencies. More than 130 aid workers were killed from 2003 to 2007. Attacks on aid workers have also become more geographically widespread. While killings used to be focused in the south and southeast, where the Taliban remnants are strongest, since 2004, attacks have happened equally in the north and west as well. About 30 aid workers, including Afghans and foreigners, were killed and 92 abducted across Afghanistan from January to September 2008, according to a UN report.¹²

The targeting of aid agencies has led to a situation where some NGOs cease operations altogether, while others must curtail programs. The cost, beyond the tragic loss of aid workers' lives, are major disruptions in assistance and implementation of urgently needed projects that affect millions of Afghans. This could fuel civil unrest as popular anger mounts at the lack of visible reconstruction results and regional disparities in aid.

ADB-NGO Cooperation in Afghanistan

ADB recognizes NGOs as significant players in the development process and cooperates with them to improve the impact, sustainability, and quality of its services. NGOs provide value in promoting sustainable development through

- *innovation*—identifying new approaches and models for specific development activities and drawing upon their close knowledge of local communities;
- *accountability*—helping ensure that project components are implemented as envisaged and planned;
- *responsiveness*—encouraging the implementation of projects to respond to local needs;
- *participation*—serving as bridges between project authorities and affected communities, and providing structures for citizen participation; and
- *sustainability*—nurturing continuity in project work, especially when implementing agencies lack capacity or when staffing changes.

The ADB resident mission in Kabul acts as a focal point for relations with NGOs and other civil society organizations in Afghanistan.

Nongovernment Organization Involvement in ADB-Financed Loan and Grant Investment Projects

Project Title	Project Objective and Nongovernment Organization/Civil Society Organization Involvement
2002	
Postconflict Multisector Program Loan (\$150 million) Approved: 4 Dec 2002	The program supported policy and institutional reforms to improve governance and strengthen the country's financial, transport, and energy sectors. Major areas of reform included currency, banking and central bank laws, the payments system, fiscal management and transparency, governance, institutional efficiency and effectiveness of ministries and agencies, regulatory framework for transport, private sector participation, and reliability of energy systems. The program recognized the need to support nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in public decision-making processes.
2004	
Agriculture Sector Program (\$55 million) Approved: 4 May 2004	The program promoted agricultural growth and poverty reduction through support for market-based policy reforms, formulation of public infrastructure investment programs, and institutional reform and organizational capacity building. It also supported the national objective of ending the country's dependence on food aid and accelerating the nation's economic recovery. The program was formulated through dialogue with key stakeholders, including NGOs, to harmonize understanding of critical issues confronting agriculture and natural resource development.
Afghanistan Investment Guarantee Facility (\$5 million) Approved: 24 Sep 2004	The project assisted Afghanistan in its reconstruction efforts by supporting private sector development and stimulating growth and employment. It did this by facilitating foreign direct investment through a risk mitigation facility addressing key investor concerns. Groups affected by the project and local NGOs were consulted about the project's environmental impacts.
Regional Airports Rehabilitation Project Phase I (\$30 million) Approved: 23 Nov 2004	The project helped rehabilitate seven regional airports damaged during two decades of conflict and neglect. NGOs participated in implementing resettlement plans.

Project Title	Project Objective and Nongovernment Organization/Civil Society Organization Involvement
2005	
Power Transmission and Distribution Project (\$26.5 million loan, \$23.5 million grant) Approved: 14 April 2005	<p>The project's objective is to reduce poverty and improve livelihood in selected areas of northern, eastern, central, and southern Afghanistan by rehabilitating and extending power transmission and distribution in those locations. The project will directly benefit poor rural households.</p> <p>A small fund for social development of women and minorities will be established to mitigate any negative project impacts. An NGO will be contracted to monitor the resettlement action plan, and to train project-affected women and minorities as part of a livelihoods program.</p>
Western Basins Water Resources Management Project (\$60.5 million loan, \$14.5 million grant) Approved: 20 Dec 2005	<p>The overall objective of the project is to improve rural livelihoods by strengthening integrated water resources management, improving irrigation service delivery, and enhancing agricultural practices to increase the productivity of irrigated agriculture in Afghanistan's western basins. NGOs will be engaged to deliver agriculture extension activities and vocational services, and to facilitate <i>mirab</i> (water user group) development. NGOs will also contribute to capacity-building activities that include training farmers and water user associations.</p>
Fiscal Management and Public Administration Reform Program (\$48 million) Approved: 29 Dec 2005	<p>The program's objective is to develop systems and procedures, supported by increased capacity, to improve budget programming, strengthen resource mobilization, develop the civil service, and enhance monitoring of public finances.</p> <p>The program recognizes the need to develop a strategy on the role of government and NGOs in service delivery. A law governing NGOs, approved in July 2005, provides an operational framework for NGO activities, including service delivery.</p>
2006	
North-South Corridor Project (\$78.2 million loan, \$20 million grant) Approved: 26 Sep 2006	<p>The project helped the government promote economic and social development and reduce poverty by rehabilitating the north-south national highway corridor to improve access for people living in remote areas at the center of the country.</p> <p>NGOs will be involved in the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign. Under this component, the project will develop the capacity of local NGOs to increase outreach, impact of HIV/AIDS and trafficking prevention activities, and monitor regulation of migration in the project area.</p>

Nongovernment Organizations Involvement in ADB-Financed Technical Assistance

Project Title	Project Objective and Nongovernment Organization/Civil Society Organization Involvement
2002	
Capacity Building for Reconstruction and Development (\$14.6 million) Approved: 30 May 2002	<p>This technical assistance project helped the Afghanistan interim administration and the subsequent transitional authority strengthen the capacity of key government and civil society institutions to support the country's rehabilitation and reconstruction.</p> <p>To strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Public Health, the ability of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to support existing health services was assessed, including provision of drugs and staff incentives. This created an opportunity to develop a more modern public health system, with the government purchasing services through partnership agreements with NGOs, particularly in areas where publicly managed services are difficult to provide.</p>
2004	
Poverty Reduction and Rural Renewable Energy Development (\$745,000) Approved: 3 Dec 2004	<p>The technical assistance project aimed to establish necessary conditions for pre-electrification of remote areas using solar power, and to lay a foundation for sustainable dissemination and use of solar energy in remote areas not accessible by the planned national electric grid.</p> <p>Norwegian Church Aid provided local know-how, implementation assistance, and day-to-day project management. It assisted in electrifying 96 households in Bandi-Amir, Bamiyan, with solar home units.</p>

Project Title	Project Objective and Nongovernment Organization/Civil Society Organization Involvement
<p>2006</p> <p>Technical Assistance to Support the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (\$2.7 million) Approved: 14 Dec 2006</p>	<p>The project has contributed to the establishment of a national development strategy. One component is to support a participatory assessment to collect information about the nature, characteristics, and impact of poverty in Afghanistan.</p> <p>A pilot poverty assessment is increasing the capacity of Afghan NGOs to play a greater role in national development, including strategy and policy-related discussions pertaining to civil society involvement in monitoring development activities and their impact.</p> <p>The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief is implementing the participatory poverty assessment through three of its member organizations.</p> <p>The development of the national development strategy has included extensive consultations with the government, NGOs, private sector representatives, and other stakeholders.</p>

NGO Involvement in ADB-Financed Activities

NGOs have taken part in several ADB-financed activities in Afghanistan. The tables below provide examples of such ADB-NGO cooperation in the context of investment projects, technical assistance projects, and projects financed by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction.

\$90 million, the fund is now more than \$360 million, of which \$224 million has been committed. JFPR helps ADB clients provide direct relief to the poorest and most vulnerable segments of society while building their capacities for self-help and income generation.¹³ JFPR is a tool for local communities and civil society organizations, including NGOs, to actively participate in the development process. In particular, it

Nongovernment Organization Involvement in Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction Projects

The Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) is an untied grant facility established by the Government of Japan and ADB in May 2000. From an initial contribution of

- initiates and supports innovative programs with high potential for improving the affected countries' situations;
- provides relatively rapid, demonstrable benefits through initiatives that have positive prospects for developing into sustainable activities; and
- assists programs designed and implemented by local populations and civil society.

Examples of Projects Financed by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction Involving Nongovernment Organizations in Afghanistan

Project Title	Project Objective and Nongovernment Organization/Civil Society Organization Involvement
<p>Community-Based Gender-Sensitive Basic Education for the Poor (\$4 million) Approved: 10 Sep 2002</p>	<p>The project aimed to reduce poverty by equipping the young people of Afghanistan, particularly girls, with values and education that strengthen their ability to overcome poverty. The project piloted a sustainable and comprehensive approach to community-based, gender-sensitive basic education in poor rural areas of post-conflict Afghanistan. One of the project's specific objectives was to promote innovative community and nongovernment organization (NGO) partnerships for integrated child and youth development services, focusing on reconciliation and development in a post-conflict society.</p> <p>CARE International worked with the government to coordinate and contract with community-based NGOs to provide education development services. Community-based organizations served as implementing agencies of subprojects.</p>

Project Title	Project Objective and Nongovernment Organization/Civil Society Organization Involvement
Road Employment Project for Settlement and Integration of Returning Refugees and Displaced Persons (\$15 million) Approved: 4 Oct 2002	The project piloted sustainable approaches to assist in the repatriation, settlement, and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons. NGOs were contracted to develop capacity and skills in support of sustainable livelihoods, support economic development and social stability by providing job opportunities to refugees and displaced persons through road improvements, and pilot-test a transition from humanitarian aid to reconstruction activities.
	Initial consultations during project preparation determined the scope of NGO involvement and assessed their capacity. An international NGO, HOPE Worldwide , was directly engaged as the resource NGO with responsibility for planning, implementing, and monitoring the project and overseeing implementing NGOs. Implementing NGOs constructed schools and clinics, managed the facilities, procured and distributed medication, and provided vocational training for community health workers.
Primary Health Care Partnership for the Poor (\$3 million) Approved: 19 Dec 2002	The project used a model where the Ministry of Public Health contracted NGOs to develop community-based primary health care. The project supported the establishment of community organizations to construct, upgrade, and maintain small health centers and water supply facilities. Ibn Sina , as NGO trustee, was responsible for building capacity of the NGO contracting unit in the Ministry of Health, and training, contracting, monitoring, and supervising the implementing NGOs to provide primary health care in selected provinces. Aga Khan Foundation/Aga Khan Development Network cofinanced the construction of three comprehensive health centers and two basic health centers in Badakhshan province.
Integrated Community Development in Northern Afghanistan (\$3 million) Approved: 26 Dec 2003	The project was intended to harness community participation to improve the living standards of poor villagers through the rehabilitation of key infrastructure, improved natural resource management, and access to credit. NGOs conducted the community mobilization program, targeting 72 communities along a road rehabilitated under the ADB Emergency Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project. ¹⁴ An international NGO, German Agro Action (GAA) , shared its approach to sustainable program management through capacity building in the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

Endnotes

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- 2 UNDP. 2004. *Afghanistan National Human Development Report 2004: Security with a Human Face*. www.undp.org/dpa/nhdr/af/AfghanHDR2004.htm.
- 3 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2007. *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey 2007*. Vienna.
- 4 International Monetary Fund. 2006. *Seventh Review Under the Staff-Monitored Program and Request for a Three-Year Arrangement Under Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility*. Washington, D.C.
- 5 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. 2001. *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*. Bonn.
- 6 Peace Operations Monitor. *Peace Operations Monitor: Afghanistan—Overview of Non-Governmental Programs*. www.peacebuild.ca/powg/POM/afghanistan/NGOafghanistan.htm
- 7 Barker, Paul. Afghanistan. Quoted in Aunohita Mojudmar, *Fighting 'NGOism'*. globalpolicy.org/ngos/aid/2006/0113fighting.htm
- 8 The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law website. www.icnl.org/knowledge/ijnl/vol8iss1/art_1.htm
- 9 NGOs Relations Department, Afghanistan Ministry of Economy.
- 10 Afghan NGOs Coordinating Body (ANCB), Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, Islamic Coordination Council, and South West Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC).
- 11 Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief. www.acbar.org/downloads/Code%20of%20Conduct_English%20Version.pdf

- ¹² Integrated Regional Information Networks. *Afghanistan: Aid Agencies Call on Taliban to Back New Humanitarian Agenda*. www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/PANA-7K8FZ9?OpenDocument&RSS20=18-P
- ¹³ Asian Development Bank. www.adb.org/jfpr/
- ¹⁴ Asian Development Bank. pid.adb.org/pid/LoanView.htm?projNo=36673&seqNo=01&typeCd=3

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This profile provides an overview of nongovernment organizations and civil society in Afghanistan. It was drafted by Anja de Beers, executive director, ACBAR, in January 2007 and revised and updated by the ADB Nongovernment Organization and Civil Society Center and Afghanistan Resident Mission. New information or comments on this profile can be sent to ngocoordinator@adb.org. The views expressed in this profile are not necessarily the views of ADB or its members.