

**Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit  
Case Study Series**

**WATER MANAGEMENT, LIVESTOCK  
AND THE OPIUM ECONOMY**

**“Poppy Free” Provinces:  
A Measure or a Target?**



This report is one of seven multi-site case studies undertaken during the second stage of AREU's three-year study "Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy" (WOL).

David Mansfield



Funding for this research  
was provided by the  
European Commission.

May 2009

**Editor:** Emily Winterbotham

**Layout:** AREU Publications Team

© 2009 Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the publisher, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. Permission can be obtained by emailing [publications@areu.org.af](mailto:publications@areu.org.af) or by calling (+93)(0)799 608 548.

## About the Author

David Mansfield is a specialist on development in drugs-producing environments. He has spent 17 years working in coca- and opium-producing countries, with over ten years experience conducting research into the role of opium in rural livelihood strategies in Afghanistan.

## About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organisation based in Kabul. AREU’s mission is to conduct high-quality research that informs and influences policy and practice. AREU also actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and facilitating reflection and debate. Fundamental to AREU’s vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives.

AREU was established in 2002 by the assistance community working in Afghanistan. Its board of directors includes representatives from donors, the UN and other multilateral agencies, and NGOs. AREU has recently received funding from: the European Commission; the governments of Denmark (DANIDA), the United Kingdom (DFID), Switzerland (SDC), Norway and Sweden (SIDA); the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the Government of Afghanistan’s Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; the World Bank; UNICEF; the Aga Khan Foundation; and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank his Afghan colleagues who continue to undertake fieldwork in increasingly trying circumstances. Their considerable efforts do not go unnoticed. I would also like to thank the AREU publications team for their editorial oversight.

David Mansfield  
May 2009

## Table of Contents

Acronyms .....	vi
Glossary .....	vi
Executive Summary .....	vii
1. Introduction and Methodology .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Methodology .....	2
2. Exploring the Concept of “Poppy Free” Provinces .....	5
2.1 “Poppy free” provinces: Its evolution .....	5
2.2 “Poppy free” provinces: Its measurement .....	6
3. Nangarhar and Ghor: Achieving “Poppy Free” Status in 2008 .....	9
3.1 Eliminating cultivation in Nangarhar in 2008: Government efforts ....	9
3.2 Eliminating cultivation in Ghor in 2008: No longer viable .....	14
3.3 Conclusion .....	18
4. The Impact of Being “Poppy Free” .....	20
4.1 Responding to “poppy free” in Nangarhar.....	20
4.2 Being “poppy free” in Ghor .....	31
5. Conclusion .....	34
References .....	37
Recent Publications from AREU .....	38

## Acronyms

AGE	anti-government elements
ANA	Afghan National Army
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
IED	improvised explosive devices
GTZ	Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation
PAL	GTZ's Project for Alternative Livelihoods
PR	Pakistani Rupees. In 2008, US\$1 equalled 70 PR.
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WOL	AREU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy

## Glossary

<i>Biswa</i>	The equivalent of 100 square metres
<i>Chawk</i>	Public square/area
<i>Kartoos</i>	A unit of weight used for opium in the eastern region of Afghanistan—there are 48 <i>kartoos</i> to one <i>seer</i> of opium; one <i>seer</i> of opium is the equivalent of 1.2 kg
<i>Jerib</i>	1/5 ha / 2,000 sqm / 0.494 acre
<i>Kalool</i>	A crop used for animal feed
<i>Maliks</i>	A senior member of an Afghan community
<i>Man</i>	The equivalent of five kilograms
<i>Seer</i>	See <i>kartoos</i> above
Lancing	The extraction of opium from opium poppy
“Improved” onion:	A variety of onion that has been improved for higher yields

## Executive Summary

This report focuses on the concept of “poppy free” provinces—an increasingly important metric by which performance in counter-narcotics in Afghanistan is currently being judged. It is based on the fourth consecutive year of fieldwork conducted in the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor under the auspices of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit’s Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy project, known in short as “WOL” and funded by the European Commission. The report does not offer a synthesis of the previous years of fieldwork undertaken, although clearly it draws on the body of knowledge established by this work.

The report details the processes by which two provinces achieved what the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has come to refer to as “poppy free” status<sup>1</sup> in the 2007/08 growing season. The two provinces are Nangarhar in the East of the country and Ghor in the central region. These are two markedly different provinces, not only from the perspective of the resources that the population have at their disposal, but also in the scale and depth of their engagement in the production and trade in opium. Matching the contrast in resources and engagement in opium poppy cultivation is the way in which Nangarhar and Ghor achieved their “poppy free” status in 2007/08 and the subsequent impact on the socioeconomic and political situation in these two provinces.

The report contrasts the way in which these two provinces became opium poppy free in the 2007/08 growing season. It highlights the proactive role played by the Governor of Nangarhar in banning opium poppy: his use of coercion, persuasion and tribal structures to create an environment in which the population was not confident that there was sufficient unity within the tribes to prevent the opium crop being destroyed were they to plant it. The report also outlines how early eradication in key districts served to increase this perception of risk and, when combined with a successful attempt by the local authorities to create the impression that the heightened profile of the United States military in the province was primarily aimed at counter-narcotics rather than counter-insurgency, succeeded in deterring planting across Nangarhar.

The report highlights how the situation in Ghor could not be more different. Here, the negligible levels of cultivation were the consequence of environmental and market forces. It shows how low opium yields and falling farm-gate prices have acted against opium poppy and, in the wake of dramatic increases in wheat prices in the 2007/08 growing season, have made it irrational to cultivate opium poppy. The reports shows that those who persist with cultivation typically do so because they have no other sources of cash income.

The report also explores the impact that such negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation have on the populations of these two provinces in the 2007/08 growing season. It shows, not unexpectedly, that this differs by locality, socioeconomic group and whether cultivation was present in the 2006/07 growing season. The report shows that the ban on opium poppy had little impact in districts such as Kama and Surkhrud that are nearer the provincial centre of Jalalabad in Nangarhar. While some in these districts referred to the ease at which they had obtained loans when they cultivated opium poppy, and others had gained income from working in neighbouring provinces, many commented that “we have forgotten opium here”.

---

1 Defined as less than 100 hectares (ha) see United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2007,” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2007), 11.

What was far more important in these districts was not the ban on opium poppy in the 2007/08 growing season but the dramatic increases in the cost of living, in particular the price of wheat, and the fall in the price of “improved” onion (a higher-yielding variety). Even here, however, the impact was more localised: in areas within these districts that were nearer the provincial centre—where irrigation was more readily available and where there was far greater crop diversification—the rise in the cost of living could be better managed. The report suggests that the real problem in these more accessible districts lay in those areas where there had been a far greater reliance on onion as a cash crop and the fall in its price had subsequently left a vacuum. These areas suffered further due to lower precipitation in 2007/08 and a growing incidence of insecurity due to the presence of either the United States military, anti-government forces, or both.

The reports highlights how the impact of both a sudden drop in income from a single cash crop and the dramatic increase in the cost of living experienced in these more accessible districts is even more acute in areas that cultivated opium poppy in Nangarhar in the 2006/07 growing season. In these areas, the loss of opium poppy in the 2007/08 growing season led to a fall in both on- and off-farm income, with the demise of wage labour opportunities associated with the weeding and harvest of the opium crop, as well as the knock on effect that the ban on opium had on the wider economy.

This paper shows that while the sale of opium in previous years had provided a flow of income, the dramatic increase in the price of basic food items and the fact that many farmers had monocropped wheat in 2007/08 meant many farmers in the districts of Achin, Khogiani and even Shinwar were already facing financial difficulties at the time of fieldwork. While there were some signs of crop diversification among those farmers with larger landholdings and better access to non-farm income opportunities, for the majority of those interviewed the market for cash crops and daily wage labour opportunities was far more limited. At the time of fieldwork this had already led to a rise in the number of sales of long-term productive assets and increasing numbers of family members being sent to join the Afghan National Army, with some of being withdrawn from school to do so.

The report documents that there was a consensus that this would get worse as the season progressed and that this would exacerbate the political situation and lead to growing levels of criminality—some of which was already present at the time of fieldwork. The belief that the government was taking no action to prevent a deterioration in both the economy and the security situation prompted many to claim that the “government has become weak.” This is ironic given that it was a “strong government” that was believed to be responsible for imposing such a comprehensive ban on opium poppy cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season.

The report shows that the impact of being “poppy free” in Ghor in 2008 resembles the situation in the more accessible districts of Kama and Surkhrud near the provincial capital in Nangarhar. Cultivation levels and farm-gate prices of opium in Chaghcharan and Dawlat Yar had been so low in the previous few years that there was little to miss. What was far more important in these areas in the 2007/08 growing season was the rapid inflation in food prices, the loss of livestock during a particularly harsh winter and lower levels of precipitation that had led to low yields for food and fodder crops. The report documents that in Ghor, respite from the impact of the economic downturn came not from opium poppy cultivation but from an increase in wage labour opportunities in Chaghcharan and the relaxing of the Iranian authorities’ position on arresting and expelling Afghan workers in 2008.

The report concludes that as a measure, the number of “poppy free” provinces has been useful, forcing media commentators and policy analysts to look beyond aggregate levels of cultivation and look at the geographic distribution of production in more detail. However, it urges caution against using the number of “poppy free” provinces in Afghanistan as a target in its own right, regardless of context. It suggests that given the level of diversity within provinces and the varying levels of dependence on opium poppy cultivation as a source of livelihood that exist, aggregating any measure of effect at the provincial level can be deceiving and potentially counter-productive.

The report highlights that there is a growing recognition amongst policymakers of the disadvantages associated with other areas-based targets, such as aggregate levels of eradication, and that, as an intervention, crop destruction will only deter future opium poppy cultivation if households have viable alternatives. It therefore suggests that given this knowledge it would be counter-productive to pursue an increase in the number of “poppy free” provinces (which may well entail eradication in areas where viable alternatives do not exist) without a clear understanding of the political and economic ramifications of such a move across the different and disparate communities within a province. The report argues that far more focus needs to be given to establishing the conditions under which more durable shifts out of opium can be achieved and that progress in both rural development and counter narcotics should be assessed based on evidence of households gaining social protection, basic security, incomes and employment, rather than simply levels of opium poppy cultivation within a given area.



# 1. Introduction and Methodology

## 1.1 Introduction

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) first coined the term “poppy free” in 2007, when thirteen of Afghanistan’s thirty-four provinces were “estimated to have less than 100 hectares (ha) of opium poppy cultivation” and were therefore qualified as “poppy free.”<sup>2</sup> In 2008 as many as eighteen provinces were declared “poppy free” by UNODC and by 2009 UNODC anticipated that as many as twenty-two provinces could be declared “poppy free”, with the possible inclusion of Badakhshan, Baghlan, Faryab and Herat “if timely and appropriate [opium] poppy eradication measures are implemented.”<sup>3</sup>

As such, the number of “poppy free” provinces is increasingly used as a measure by which to judge counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan, along with the total numbers of hectares of opium cultivated each year, and still to some extent the total area of the crop destroyed through eradication. The desire for an increase in the number of “poppy free” provinces each year and specific calls for action to achieve this aim, such as those by UNODC above, have made it a target in its own right. What remains unclear is how useful a term and subsequent target the number of “poppy free” provinces is and how it differs from other annual area-based targets, such as aggregate levels of cultivation or the amount of crop eradicated.

To explore the value of the concept and measure of “poppy free” provinces, this report focuses on two of the provinces that were declared poppy free in 2008: the provinces of Nangarhar in the East and Ghor in the central region. It is based on fieldwork conducted in Nangarhar in April<sup>4</sup> and October 2008<sup>5</sup>, and Ghor in July 2008. It also builds on previous fieldwork undertaken for the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit’s Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy (WOL) project in 2005, 2006 and 2007, as well as the Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation’s (GTZ) Project for Alternative Livelihoods (PAL) in Nangarhar in April 2005.

This particular report does not seek to synthesise the findings of the last four years of fieldwork in the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor. A previous WOL report has already documented the impact of the last comprehensive ban in Nangarhar Province, implemented in the 2004/05 growing season, and the processes that led to the eventual return of widespread opium poppy cultivation in the 2006/07 growing season.<sup>6</sup> The socioeconomic, political and environmental processes that led to the introduction of the crop into Ghor in the late 1990s and its rapid expansion in the 2001/02 growing season have also been documented.<sup>7</sup> Instead, this report explores how these provinces achieved their “poppy free” status in 2008; the impact such low levels of cultivation have had

---

2 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2008” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2008), 8.

3 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Opium Winter Assessment” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, January 2009), i and 1.

4 This work was undertaken for AREU.

5 This work was undertaken for Development Alternatives Inc who is responsible for implementing USAID’s Alternative Development Programme - East.

6 David Mansfield, “Resurgence and Reductions: Explanations for Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor in 2005-2007” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008).

7 David Mansfield, “Opium Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor December 2006” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2006).

on the rural population; and the likely sustainability of what are reported be negligible levels of cultivation. This report should be read in conjunction with Adam Pain's work for the WOL project that covers a further "poppy free" province—Balkh in the northern region.<sup>8</sup>

This report is divided into three main sections. The first section discusses the concept of "poppy free" provinces, its measurement and how it has evolved into a new target, rather than simply being a measure of the geographic distribution of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. The second section looks in detail at two provinces that were declared poppy free in 2008 and how such low levels of cultivation were achieved. It contrasts two very different "models" of poppy free provinces. In the first, the vast majority of the population has abandoned opium poppy due to the shift in the terms of trade between opium and wheat and a growing reliance on migration to Iran. In the other, the shift to wheat is not a response to the changing prices of opium and wheat but a reaction to a governor who has taken a proactive position against opium poppy cultivation and has persuaded and coerced farmers not to plant.

The third section looks at the impact of the attainment of a "poppy free" status on the rural population in these two provinces and examines the implications this has for the sustainability of such low levels of cultivation. It highlights how the attainment of a "poppy free" status impacts across different locations and socioeconomic groups, both across and within provinces. The report concludes by urging caution against turning yet another area-based measure—this time the geographic distribution of cultivation—into a target in its own right, regardless of the impact on the different and disparate communities within a province.

## 1.2 Methodology

### *Approach*

Conducting research on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has never been an easy task. As with any illegal or underground activity, data collection is difficult and vulnerable to the biases of those involved in drugs production and the organisations responsible for its control.<sup>9</sup> Matters are made all the more difficult in Afghanistan by the absence of robust data on the most basic variables, including population size and composition. The worsening security situation in some parts of rural Afghanistan, including many of those areas visited for the purpose of this study, further exacerbates data collection difficulties, in some areas making fieldwork all but impossible. Pressure to act against opium cultivation and its trade is increasing the already heightened sensitivities associated with discussions about any behaviour that could result in government or international action.

In such an environment, undertaking large-scale surveys using probability sampling techniques makes little sense and is anyway not feasible.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the focus here is on

---

<sup>8</sup> Adam Pain, *"Let Them Eat Promises": Closing the Opium Poppy Fields in Balkh and its Consequences* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research Unit, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Gootenberg, "Talking Like a State" in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders and the other Side of Globalisation*, ed. William van Schendel and Itty Abraham, (Indiana University Press, 2005), 121.

<sup>10</sup> "This procedure is intended to produce a representative sample. The process draws subjects from an identified population in such a manner that every unit in that population has precisely the same chance (probability) of being included in the sample." Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Pearson Education Inc, 2007), 42.

understanding the variation between the diverse areas and socioeconomic groups that cultivate opium poppy and how they respond to the different political, socioeconomic and environmental factors that curtail or encourage its cultivation. To achieve this, districts were selected for fieldwork on the basis of the differing asset portfolios of the rural population within them, with final selection based on districts where there was maximum variation. For example, proximity to the provincial capital typically coincides with a number of assets. Provincial capitals such as Jalalabad and Chaghcharan are in established areas with better access to irrigated land and water. A household in a district neighbouring the provincial capital, like Surkhrud, Behsud or Kama, is generally more likely to have a larger landholding with a greater availability and consistency of water supply than a household in a more remote district, such as Achin.

Proximity to the provincial capital can also mean better access to commodity markets for the purchase and sale of agricultural and non-agricultural goods, as well as labour markets for daily wage labour opportunities and perhaps salaried employment. Those areas nearest the provincial centre may also experience enhanced governance and security due to better infrastructure and accessibility, as well as, in the case of Nangarhar, greater tribal diversity, making it easier for the provincial authorities to impose their will. The history and extent of opium poppy cultivation was also considered when identifying which districts to undertake fieldwork in. In both Ghor and Nangarhar, preference was given to revisiting districts and households where fieldwork had been undertaken in the 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 growing seasons.

Within each district, interviews were held with a variety of different socioeconomic groups in order to explore how assets and capabilities affected changes in cultivation. In Nangarhar, interviews were also conducted on the impact significant reductions in opium production had on the household economy and the kind of coping strategies households adopted. Interviews were also conducted in the bazaars of Chaghcharan and Jalalabad, as well as with shopkeepers and from district centres and along transit routes (such as Kahi and Markoh in Nangarhar and Angaran in Ghor). These interviews were used to explore the contribution (both positive and negative) opium poppy cultivation made to the local economy.

In all interviews the focus was on the different assets and activities that constituted the livelihood of the household and what impact any change in circumstance had on the different activities pursued and the overall welfare of the household. As such, opium was regarded as another agricultural commodity and was not the focus of specific enquiries. However, in those areas where opium poppy was cultivated or had been cultivated in previous years, respondents freely discussed most aspects of the cultivation and trade in opium.

The fieldwork was undertaken by the author in partnership with national colleagues. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted in a conversational manner. In order to place respondents at ease and to avoid raising suspicions, notes were not taken during interviews but were written up once the interviews had finished and the interviewer had departed. Given the paucity of robust data on rural livelihood strategies in Afghanistan it is not possible to determine whether this sample is truly “representative.” However, this work builds on over ten years of fieldwork in rural Afghanistan, including in the late 1990s, where research on the role of opium poppy in rural livelihoods was decidedly easier due to the improved security situation at the time and the absence of counter-narcotics measures. Where possible the findings of this study are cross-referenced with other research that has been conducted in this area. Specific villages and individual households are not identified in this report.

## Access

In 2008, fieldwork was undertaken in the province of Nangarhar in mid-April, the same time that it had been conducted in 2007. In 2005 and 2006, fieldwork was undertaken slightly earlier, in late March/early April. The districts covered were Achin, Kama, Khogiani, Shinwar and Surkhrud. Both “upper” and “lower” parts of each district were covered in order to explore the diversity within districts and how access to water impacted on assets, dependency on opium poppy cultivation and the coping strategies adopted in response to the implementation of the opium poppy ban.

In 2008 security concerns meant that the mobility of the author was limited to the district of Surkhrud and lower Shinwar. There were some tensions associated with opium poppy in upper Shinwar, Khogiani and Achin, but the larger problem related to growing levels of criminality. In the districts of Khogiani and Achin there were reports of a number of roadside robberies during the week prior to fieldwork and there were a growing number of incidences in Shinwar District. Many associated these with the economic downturn and increasing levels of underemployment among young men in these areas. There were also reports of “unknown gunmen” and “Taliban” seen during the night in Khogiani. In this district, some respondents recounted their experiences of being threatened by the “Taliban” at dusk or during the night for playing music or while irrigating their fields. In both Achin and Shinwar districts there were reports of robberies on houses. It was often claimed that assailants were in Afghan National Police uniforms. Fieldwork in Upper Shinwar, Achin and Khogiani districts was undertaken by Afghan colleagues alone.

In the lower part of Kama District the establishment of a United States military base just inside the neighbouring District of Goshta had led to an increase in fighting and the positioning of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along the roadside. Just prior to fieldwork a number of Afghan nationals had been killed, accused of being Taliban. This had increased tensions in the area and led to mistrust and rumours of informants among the local population. A well-placed respondent indicated that it would not be advisable for the author to visit the area, not only for his own safety, but for those from the area taking part in the research. Fieldwork in Kama District was undertaken solely by Afghan colleagues.

In Ghor Province initial fieldwork was undertaken in August 2005. This was then followed up in the middle of July in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Due to the logistics of travelling in Ghor (even in the summer months) and security in the districts bordering the provinces of Helmand and Dai Kundi, fieldwork was restricted to the districts of Chaghcharan and Sharak in 2005. In 2006, security in Sharak was problematic so fieldwork was undertaken in the same villages (and where possible households) in Chaghcharan and coverage was extended to include the district of Dawlat Yar, to the east of the provincial centre.<sup>11</sup> In 2007, fieldwork was repeated in the same villages in the districts of Chaghcharan and Dawlat Yar.

In 2008, a conflict over water between the communities in the upper and lower parts of Dawlat Yar meant fieldwork had to be abandoned in the upper part of the district and the team had to return to Chaghcharan. The District of Sharak remained out of bounds due to a growing conflict between two commanders in Kamenj that had led to a growing incidence of violent roadside robberies and growing tension in the area. It was possible to revisit all the areas in Chaghcharan District covered in 2007.

---

<sup>11</sup> From 2007 UNODC no longer includes Dawlat Yar and Charsada under Chaghcharan district. Historical data for poppy cultivation in these two districts remains under Chaghcharan.

## 2. Exploring the Concept of “Poppy Free” Provinces

The term “poppy free” was first used by the UNODC in 2007 when thirteen of Afghanistan’s thirty-four provinces were “estimated to have less than 100 ha of opium poppy cultivation” and therefore qualified as “poppy free”.<sup>12</sup> The increase in the number of poppy free provinces in 2008 and the subsequent calls for further increases in 2009 may suggest that it has become a target in its own right. What does the term really tell us and how useful is it in understanding the transition out of opium poppy cultivation? This section explores the evolution of the term “poppy free,” how and what it measures, and how useful it is.

### 2.1 “Poppy free” provinces: Its evolution

In 2007, UNODC reported that the provinces of Balkh, Bamyan, Ghazni, Khost, Kunduz, Logar, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktya, Panjsher, Parwan, Wardak and Samangan were “poppy free”—a total of thirteen provinces. By 2008, as many as eighteen provinces were declared “poppy free”. Of these eighteen provinces, thirteen were those declared “poppy free” in 2007 and five were reported to have grown opium poppy in 2007 but had reduced cultivation to less than 100 ha in 2008. These five provinces were Ghor, Jawzjan, Nangarhar, Sari Pul and Takhar. By January 2009, UNODC reported that as many as 22 province might be poppy free “if timely and appropriate [opium] poppy eradication measures are implemented.”<sup>13</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that the term “poppy free” evolved at the same time that levels of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan reached an unprecedented peak of 193,000 ha in 2007. What it attempted to capture was the geographic distribution of cultivation and how it had changed over that year. In fact, when combined with the estimate of total cultivation, the measure of “poppy free” provinces helped reflect the fact that despite increases in the area of cultivation, the rise was not uniform across all provinces and both the level of cultivation and its expansion were concentrated in a limited number of provinces in the South.

In many ways this was a relief from the usual narrative around aggregate levels of cultivation. Not, as cynics might suggest, because total levels of cultivation had risen in 2007, but because the annual process of reviewing Afghanistan’s performance in counter-narcotics up to then had largely involved two metrics: the total amount of land dedicated to opium poppy and the area of crop destroyed through the annual eradication campaign.

The result of using such simplistic metrics was that where aggregate levels of cultivation rose, there were calls by some for higher levels of eradication, regardless of the socioeconomic position of the farmers involved. Furthermore, this was despite evidence pointing to the fact that greater levels of eradication did not necessarily result in lower levels of cultivation in subsequent years and could even be counterproductive.<sup>14</sup> At least the inclusion of an estimate of “poppy free” provinces compelled those discussing counter-narcotics in Afghanistan to look beyond aggregate levels of cultivation and

---

12 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2008,” 8.

13 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Winter Assessment,” i and 1.

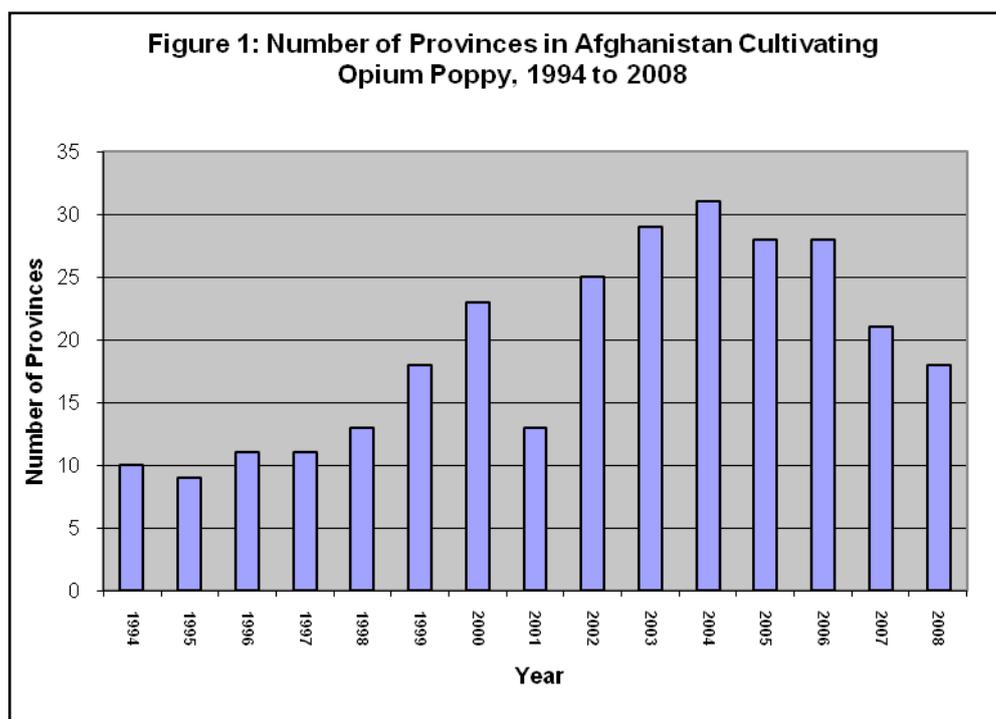
14 Mansfield, David and Adam Pain, *Opium Poppy Eradication: How do you raise risk where there is nothing to lose?* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2006); Barnett Rubin and Jake Sherman, *Counter Narcotics to Stabilise Afghanistan: The False Promise of Crop Eradication* (New York: Centre for International Cooperation at New York University, 2008).

eradication and look at possible explanations for such divergent patterns of cultivation across the country—even if sometimes they did not manage to differentiate between correlation and causality.

The usual critique of “poppy free” as a concept is that the measure does not reflect the fact that opium may still be traded though a province, drugs may be used, or that other drug crops like marijuana may still be cultivated there.<sup>15</sup> Nor does the concept or its measurement capture the extent to which labourers travel from “poppy free” provinces to work as daily wage labourers in those provinces in the South where opium production is now concentrated—a common coping strategy in response to negligible levels of cultivation in the province of Nangarhar. However, this critique seems rather ill-placed given that the language is relatively clear in that the term is “poppy free” and not “drug free.” As such, the term does not claim to measure any more than the absence of the opium poppy crop in any given area.

## 2.2 “Poppy free” provinces: Its measurement

UNODC is clear. A province is declared “poppy free” when it estimates that a province has less than 100 ha of opium poppy cultivation.<sup>16</sup> This estimate is based on its own annual survey of levels of opium poppy cultivation that is a composite of the results of both remote sensing and a ground survey.<sup>17</sup> Prior to 2007, UNODC did not report on “poppy free” provinces as such but reported the number of provinces that cultivated opium poppy (see Figure 1).



15 See Fabrice Potter, “Opium in Afghanistan: A Reality Check” in *Afghanistan: Now You see Me?* (London: March 2009, LSE Strategic Update).

16 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2008,” 8.

17 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2008,” 131.

Indeed, earlier surveys, particularly those undertaken prior to the use of satellite imagery in 2002, had always found it difficult to ensure complete coverage of the country. Reports of cultivation could not always be followed up due to problems of logistics or insecurity. The province of Ghor is a good example of an area in which cultivation was reported in the late 1990s, in the southern and remote districts of Pasaband and Taiwara, bordering Helmand, but its presence could not be verified due to problems of access.<sup>18</sup> Similar incidences of new cultivation were reported in other areas of Afghanistan in the mid and late 1990s, resulting in the annual survey differentiating between those provinces and districts where opium poppy had been “cultivated for the first time” and those areas that were “surveyed for the first time.”<sup>19</sup> Consequently, earlier annual surveys were often not in the best position to assess whether a province was in fact “poppy free” but were better placed to report on levels of cultivation in those areas in which UNODC surveyed.

The move to the use of remote sensing has clearly improved the overall assessment of cultivation and made it easier to establish estimates of cultivation in areas where insecurity might prevent a ground assessment. Ground based surveys are, however, still the main source of data on levels of cultivation in thirteen of the eighteen provinces declared poppy free in 2008.<sup>20</sup>

It is also important to recognise that there is not complete unanimity on the figures across the different organisations responsible for estimating the area of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. For example, the United States Government reported that 15 provinces had less than 100 ha of opium poppy cultivation in 2007 and would qualify as “poppy free” under UNODC’s definition, compared to UNODC’s thirteen provinces in the same year. With regard to the two provinces that are the focus of this report, according to US data neither would qualify as “poppy free” in 2008 as Nangarhar was estimated to have a residual 275 ha of cultivation and Ghor an estimated 430 ha of opium production remaining (see Figures 2 and 3 over page).

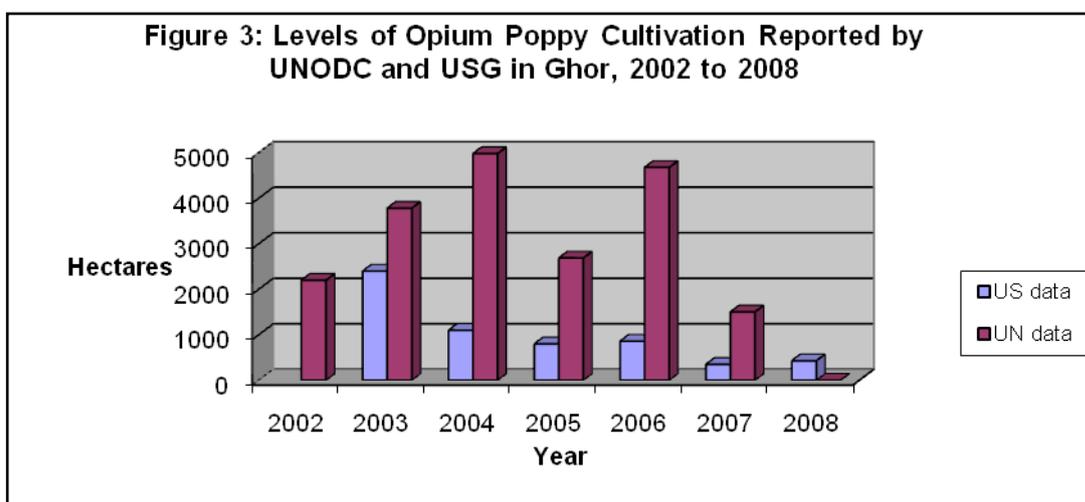
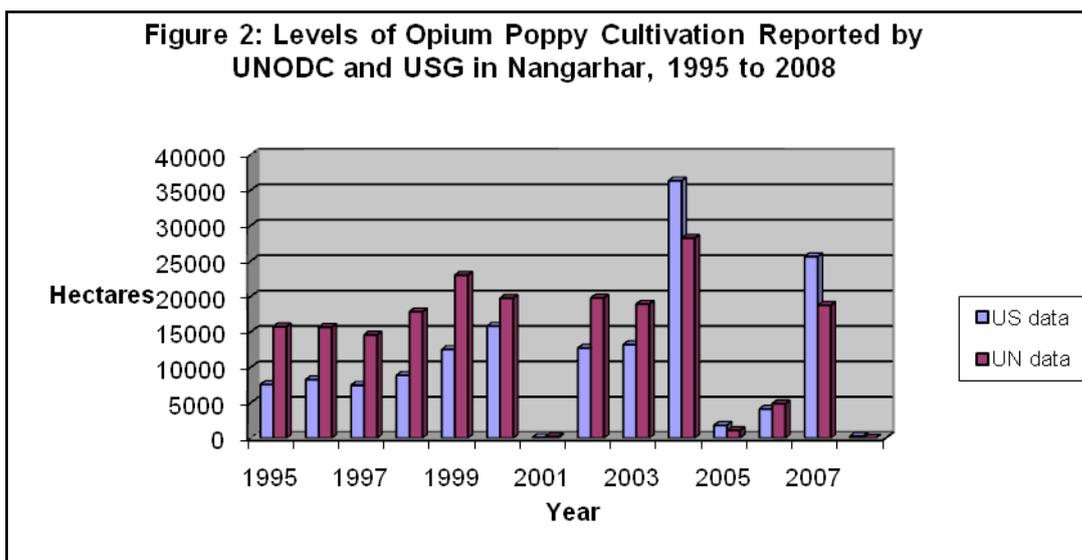
The fact that there is not complete agreement on the levels of cultivation in different provinces is perhaps of no surprise given the difficulty of undertaking this kind of work, even with better access to affordable remote sensing over the last few years. Nor does it negate the value in reporting the geographic distribution of poppy cultivation across Afghanistan. As indicated above, the introduction of the language around “poppy free” provinces has helped shift the debate away from judging counter-narcotics against the formerly accepted metrics of aggregate levels of cultivation and the number of hectares eradicated. As an additional measure it can help reflect that the aggregate level of cultivation could increase while at the same time opium production might be maintained, or even fall, to negligible levels in other provinces.

---

18 For a detailed account of the introduction and spread of opium poppy cultivation in Ghor see David Mansfield, “Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor.”

19 See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Annual Opium Survey, 1997” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 1997).

20 “Satellite data was the sole source used to estimate the area under opium poppy in 21 provinces in 2008. In the remaining 13 provinces opium poppy cultivation was estimated on the basis of assessments by surveyors of the extent of cultivation in sampled villages. In these 13 provinces, opium poppy cultivation was either negligible or they were poppy free.” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2008” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2008), 131.



However, while potentially a helpful metric of distribution, what is perhaps less clear is whether the categorisation and grouping of all provinces that are estimated to have less than 100 ha of opium poppy under one banner is particularly helpful to both policymaking and developing operational plans. As with the other area-based measures, such as levels of cultivation and eradication, simply reporting the numbers of poppy free provinces is insufficient. There is a need to understand more about the process and the context. How did these areas come to be “poppy free”? What are the implications of this situation for the rural population within the provinces declared “poppy free”? And what is the likelihood that such negligible levels of cultivation will persist? Without this context and a sense of whether there is evidence that low levels of cultivation are accompanied by positive progress in households gaining social protection, basic security, income and employment, there is a danger that being “poppy free” could be a short term and temporary status for a province that could ultimately prove counter-productive.

The next section takes two provinces that the UNODC has declared “poppy free” and explores how they came to have such low levels of cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season.

### 3. Nangarhar and Ghor: Achieving “Poppy Free” Status in 2008

In 2008, UNODC declared both Nangarhar and Ghor “poppy free” provinces. They went on to report that, “In 2008, Nangarhar Province became poppy free for the first time since the United Nations began opium [poppy] cultivation monitoring in Afghanistan.”<sup>21</sup> While there is some debate regarding the final level of cultivation in the province, it is clear that there was a dramatic reduction in the amount of opium poppy produced in the province compared with the 2006/07 growing season, when an estimated 18,739 ha were grown.

This is of course not the first time that such a dramatic reduction in opium poppy cultivation was reported in Nangarhar Province. The Taliban prohibition led to cultivation falling from an estimated 18,747 ha in the 1999/2000 growing season to 218 ha in 2000/01. While cultivation was not reduced to such negligible levels as in 2000/01, significant reductions were also achieved in Nangarhar under the governorship of Haji Din Mohammed in 2004/05, when cultivation reached a reported 1,093 ha compared to an estimated 28,213 ha twelve months earlier.

The rapid fall in opium poppy cultivation in Nangarhar in 2007/08 is in contrast to the more gradual decline in production in the province of Ghor. Never a significant producer, particularly when the low yielding nature of the crop in the province is considered, increasing numbers of farmers who previously cultivated opium poppy in Ghor turned away from the crop after, what is referred to locally, as “the first year of Karzai.”

This section explores the factors that led to these two provinces achieving their “poppy free” status in the 2007/08 growing season. It does not provide a historical account of cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor and their differing levels of engagement in opium production and trade, as this has been provided in detail in a previous WOL report.<sup>22</sup> Instead, it documents the two very different routes that these provinces followed to achieve such negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation. In Nangarhar, the government has adopted a proactive political strategy aimed at eliminating cultivation in one single year. In Ghor, environmental and market factors have conspired against the crop for a number of years, leading to its eventual abandonment by all but the most marginal farmers.

#### 3.1 Eliminating cultivation in Nangarhar in 2008: Government efforts

No opium poppy was visible during the time that fieldwork was conducted in Nangarhar province. This was despite widespread travel in some of the more remote parts of the districts. The crop was even absent from the upper parts of the districts of Khogiani, Shinwar and Achin, where it had been visible during the 2004/05 growing season despite a concerted effort to enforce a ban on opium poppy cultivation. (See Illustration 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d). In fact, many respondents in these areas equated the negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation not with 2004/05, when there was still 1,093 ha according to UNODC, but with the Taliban prohibition in the 2000/01 growing season, when only an estimated 218 ha persisted in some of the most remote areas of the province.

21 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Survey, 2008,” Executive Summary, 5.

22 David Mansfield, “Resurgence and Reductions: Explanations for Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor in 2006-07” (Kabul: AREU, 2008).

The decline in cultivation was attributed to the actions of the provincial governor and the local authorities under his command. In fact, there were consistent reports that the governor had mounted a pro-active campaign in the 2007/08 planting season, using a range of different measures to coerce and persuade farmers not to plant opium poppy and if they did, to quickly destroy the crop—selecting strategic locations for early eradication to maximise the deterrent effect. In many cases, the governor himself was reported to have visited different districts and informed the population of the ban on opium poppy and that swift action would be taken against those farmers who did not comply with the ban.

Early action to arrest and detain<sup>23</sup> a number of farmers from some of the more remote parts of Achin and Khogiani is believed to have been key to sending the message that opium production would not be tolerated in 2007/08, not only in these districts but also in the more accessible areas nearer to the Torkham road. In Achin, these arrests were reported to have deterred planting even among respondents in the upper parts of the district where cultivation persisted during the previous ban on opium poppy in the 2004/05 growing season.

The compliance of a number of *maliks*, particularly from the Shinwari tribe in Achin, is also believed to have been instrumental in creating the perception that the governor and the local authorities could impose their will on the population in the 2007/08 growing season. Indeed, respondents report that the fact that those with influence and power did not elect to grow opium poppy at the beginning of the season and encouraged others not to cultivate served as an indicator that the provincial authorities were serious about banning opium poppy cultivation in 2007/08. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, it was reported that there was no unity across the tribe in opposing the imposition of a ban on opium production as there had been in the 2006/07 growing season.<sup>24</sup> There were claims from respondents in Shinwar that the *maliks* had even indicated that if farmers were arrested for cultivating poppy, the *maliks* would not negotiate their release. Claims that both the authorities and the *maliks* had reported that reductions in cultivation would be rewarded by increases in development assistance were also common.



Illustration 1a: Upper Shinwar, Nangarhar April 2005

---

23 It was reported that 27 farmers from Achin were arrested and imprisoned in Jalalabad. Some of those interviewed reported that the penalty for cultivation was a fine of between 10,000 and 50,000 Afs and a sentence of three to six months in jail.

24 David Mansfield, "Resurgence and Reductions."

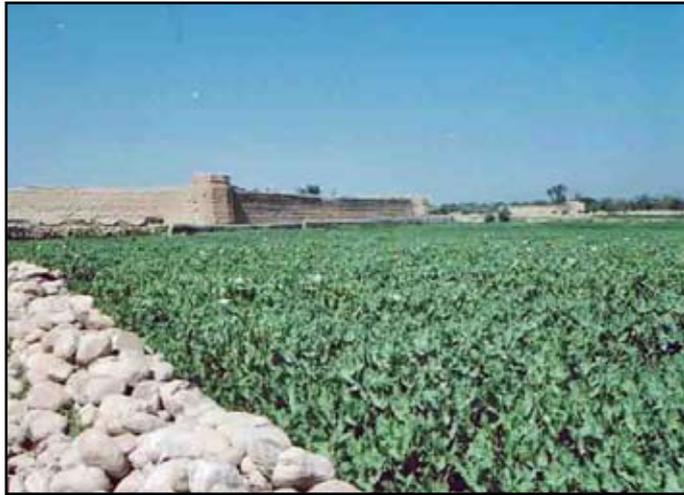


Illustration 1b: Upper Shinwar, Nangarhar April 2006



Illustration 1c: Upper Shinwar, Nangarhar April 2007



Illustration 1d: Upper Shinwar, Nangarhar April 2008

As in the year of the Taliban prohibition (2000/01) and the ban in 2004/05, there were rumours that some of the *maliks* received payments for their compliance with the enforcement of the ban on opium cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season.<sup>25</sup> Respondents in the districts of Achin, Shinwar and Khogiani were quick to suggest that payments in cash, and in some cases cars, had been made to the *Maliks*. Although the ban on opium was primarily blamed on the governor and local authorities, respondents targeted considerable vitriol at the *Maliks* who were seen as instrumental in the implementation of the ban.

There were also consistent reports in both the districts of Khogiani and Achin that a further element of the local authorities' campaign to deter cultivation was to suggest that the increased visibility of U.S. military forces in the area was primarily aimed at counter-narcotics objectives rather than counter-insurgency. In fact, in both districts it was reported that the district *woliswals* had warned that if farmers cultivated opium poppy it would result in raids on their houses by U.S. soldiers. The provincial governor is reported to have told the residents of Achin: "You should not grow poppy. I don't have the power to protect you and your land from United States forces."

It is easy to see how respondents might have believed these claims. For example, the general perception was that the 2007/08 growing season's counter-narcotics campaign coincided with U.S. military efforts to establish Forward Operating Bases in the districts of Chapahar, Khogaini and Achin and a significant increase in U.S. military presence in these districts. With this increased presence came a rise in the number of raids on household compounds<sup>26</sup> and, given the extent of production in the province the previous year, the inevitable discovery of opium. This led to arrests, and when combined with claims, rightly or wrongly, that U.S. forces were directly involved in delivering counter-narcotics messages, compounded the perception that the purpose of the increased U.S. military presence was primarily aimed at counter-narcotics.

It is claimed the establishment of checkpoints, house searches and the cordoning off of villages led to the elders from Achin complaining to the governor in late October of 2007, just prior to planting season. In this meeting it is suggested that the *maliks* and elders of Achin District pledged to the Governor of Nangarhar not to cultivate opium poppy on the understanding that U.S. forces would not have a permanent presence in the district. It was also reported that as part of this agreement the elders agreed not to give free access through the district to anti-government elements (AGE) travelling between Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup>

The cumulative effect of this effort was that in Nangarhar there were very few incidences of farmers planting opium poppy in the 2007/08 growing season and, as in previous seasons when dramatic reductions in cultivation had been achieved, eradication was actually rather minimal. UNODC estimates that the local authorities eradicated as little as 26 ha of opium poppy in 2008. However, this figure does not consider the earlier

---

25 For more details on the imposition of the Taliban prohibition and the ban in 2004/05 see David Mansfield and Adam Pain, *Counter Narcotics in Afghanistan: The Failure of Success?* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008); and David Mansfield, "Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor in 2005-2007."

26 Typically, these raids would seem to be poorly understood by farmers who do not see themselves as opium traders and believe the intrusion into their homes dishonours the female members of their household and scares their children. The discovery of weapons during such raids and the subsequent arrest of the homeowner are similarly misunderstood given the fact that the vast majority of households will have one or more guns in their possession "for protection."

27 It was reported that Taliban commanders visited Achin in late October and offered their support to the population. Their offer was reportedly declined.

eradication that occurred in late November and December 2007. What is notable is that while this early eradication campaign in the initial part of the 2007/08 growing season is seen to have played a catalytic role in deterring planting, the previous year’s more concerted eradication campaign—which was much more significant in terms of area destroyed<sup>28</sup>—was seen to have had little effect, even in those districts where levels of eradication were more significant.

Indeed, much of the eradication conducted in the 2006/07 growing season was seen by respondents to have been “for the cameras,” largely focusing on those areas nearest the roads and district centres.<sup>29</sup> Only one of those interviewed reported that their crop had been destroyed the previous season, but had nevertheless still managed to obtain some yield from the plants left. All of those interviewed with relatively larger landholdings, and more significant levels of opium poppy cultivation, escaped eradication altogether.<sup>30</sup>

*“The day that they destroyed my crop I was not there. My brother was there and gave them 500PR. They walked through my land but they did not destroy all of it.”*

Respondent in Shinwar district, Nangarhar

In the District of Shinwar, it was common to hear reports of agreements being reached between communities and the eradication teams during the 2006/07 growing season. These agreements typically involved payments to both those eradicating the crop and those whose crop would be destroyed. For example, one respondent claimed that he had given 500 PR to the local police so that they would ignore his crop and subsequently 4,000 PR to the eradication team to leave his crop intact (see Box 1). He claimed that there had been no eradication beyond his house, which was 300 metres from the main road. Those who lost part of their opium poppy were typically paid the equivalent of between three to five *kartoos*<sup>31</sup> of opium in compensation by each of those in the village whose crop remained undisturbed.

As such, the 2006/07 campaign to reduce cultivation would seem to be in marked contrast with efforts in 2007/08. Where the previous season focused on levels of eradication of the planted crop shortly before the harvest, resulting in claims that as much as 14 percent of the estimated crop had been destroyed, the effort in 2007/08 focused on deterring cultivation in the first place. In 2006/07 eradication was seen to be discriminate, targeting those areas most accessible and visible, and even then leaving some of the crop intact. Efforts to reduce cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season were believed to be comprehensive and eradication was only used strategically to reinforce this message.

Perhaps the most important factor in achieving such negligible levels of cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season was the fact that the local authorities had the key tribal elders supporting their efforts and were successful in giving the impression that the US military would act against opium poppy cultivation. This is in stark contrast to the 2006/07 growing season, when the impact of two years of low cultivation levels in districts such

28 UNODC report that 3,048 ha of opium poppy were eradicated in Nangarhar province during the 2006/07 growing season. UNODC/MCN Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2007, is this the same as reference as “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2007,” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2007).

29 For more detailed account of the 2006/07 eradication campaign see David Mansfield, “Resurgence and Reductions.

30 One of these individuals cultivated nine jeribs of land of which eight were opium poppy. The landowner had been a commander from the anti-soviet mujahideen.

31 There are 48 *kartoos* to one *seer* of opium. In Nangarhar, one *seer* of opium is the equivalent of 1.2 kg.

as Shinwar and Khogiani led to growing unity within the Mohmandi, Shinwari and Khogiani tribes and agreement that they would oppose any efforts by the government, or indeed their own *maliks*, to implement a third consecutive year of an opium ban.

### 3.2 Eliminating cultivation in Ghor in 2008: No longer viable

In contrast with Nangarhar, there was still some opium poppy cultivation in Ghor in 2008. However, as in previous years, plots were small and the crop was typically dry. This cultivation was mostly in the upper parts of the valleys visited where access to water was less problematic. Where harvesting was taking place, the crop was yielding very little and respondents typically reported yields of less than one kilogram per *jerib*, with a few respondents claiming yields of up to two kilograms per *jerib*. Given the particularly dry conditions in some of the valleys visited, it is no surprise that yields were this low (see Illustration 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d).

According to respondents, there was little evidence of a concerted effort by the governor or the district authorities to prevent opium poppy cultivation in 2008. Respondents were aware that the central government opposed cultivation as they had heard these messages on the radio, as they had in previous years. There were reports of district officials in Shinyar in Dawlat Yar informing farmers that they should not cultivate opium poppy in 2008, but in the district of Chaghcharan none of those interviewed reported that that provincial authorities had disseminated this message.

There were, however, isolated reports of eradication and in the village of Shinyar in Dawlat Yar there was evidence that some of the standing crop had been destroyed. This particular crop, as with all of the opium poppy seen in Chaghcharan, was stunted, dried and low yielding. The crop damage from eradication that could be seen was largely limited to the loss of a number of opium poppy capsules to the front of what was only a two *biswa*<sup>32</sup> plot of opium poppy, the rest of the crop remaining intact (see Illustration 3). The eradication had occurred in mid-June, three weeks prior to fieldwork. No other eradication was reported in the areas covered by the fieldwork and none of those interviewed had lost their crop to eradication in the 2006/07 growing season.



Illustration 2a: Upper Qartoos, Chaghcharan 2005

32 One biswa is the equivalent of 100 metres square.



**Illustration 2b: Upper Qartoos, Chaghcharan 2006**



**Illustration 2c: Upper Qartoos, Chaghcharan 2007**



**Illustration 2d: Upper Qartoos, Chaghcharan 2008**

In fact, the general consensus among respondents was that a combination of low prices and low yields had deterred opium poppy cultivation in 2008. Many of those interviewed that were growing opium poppy in 2008 were not aware of exactly how low the market price of opium had reached at the time of fieldwork, but all complained there were

currently no traders in the area to purchase the crop. Those that did cite prices reported they were as low as 2,500 Afs a kilogram, down from 3,500 Afs in 2007 and 4,000 Afs in 2006,<sup>33</sup> and 5,000 to 6,000 Afs in 2005.<sup>34</sup> Subsequent fieldwork in November 2008 reported that prices fell as low as 1,500 Afs by the end of the harvest season in August.<sup>35</sup>

The 2007/08 growing season was not the “the last year of the Taliban” (2000/01) or “the first year of Karzai” (2001/02), when opium prices were as high as the equivalent of 25,000 Afs per kilogram, and even the kind of marginal crop that is obtained in Ghor would have proven profitable. However, perhaps more importantly in 2008, wheat prices in Ghor had risen to as high as 50 Afs per kilogram in May, falling to 38 Afs per kilogram in July. With opium prices and yields so low, and wheat prices significantly higher than the 10-14 Afs per kilogram that had been the case even twelve months previously, many respondents were aware that opium poppy cultivation was no longer a viable option.

For example at the time of interview a farmer producing 2 kilograms of opium from one *jerib* of land and selling it at 2,500 Afs per kilogram could have purchased around 130 kg of wheat. However, had they elected to cultivate wheat on that *jerib* of land they would have obtained yields of between 350 and 500 kg of wheat. Given that, as one farmer put it, “we only started growing poppy due to falling wheat yields during the drought,” in addition to the significant fall in opium prices since the peak that followed the Taliban prohibition in the 2000/01 growing season, there seemed little reason to cultivate opium poppy in 2008, and there were only few that did.

Those that did persist with opium poppy cultivation appeared to have few opportunities for cash income, either due to a loss of livestock or insufficient male family members who could migrate in search of work (typically to Iran). For example, the respondent in Shinyar whose crop had been eradicated reported that he had only decided to plant opium when he saw that the spring rains had failed and he was unlikely to get a wheat crop from his rainfed land.

Furthermore, there was a real sense of disappointment among those who had cultivated opium poppy in Ghor in 2008. For example, one respondent in Sufak who had returned to opium poppy cultivation after abandoning it for two consecutive years was angry at his decision to cultivate almost half of his one *jerib* of irrigated land with opium poppy. At the time of interview he had lanced the crop three times and obtained as little as half of a kilogram of opium. The respondent reported that he and his nine-year old daughter would lance the crop for a fourth and final time but he was not confident that it would yield much.

---

33 David Mansfield, “Sustaining the Decline? Understanding the Changes in Opium Poppy Cultivation in the 2008/09 Growing Season”, A report for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government (ADIDU: Forthcoming May 2009), 44.

34 Mansfield, “Opium Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor,” 36.

35 David Mansfield, “Sustaining the Decline?”



**Illustration 3: Eradicated poppy in Shinyar, Dawlat Yar 2008**

This particular individual had already experienced the systematic loss of his herd over the previous four years, falling from 15 sheep in 2005 to ten in 2006 and four in 2007. When interviewed in July 2007 he anticipated selling a further two sheep prior to the winter. In the end he had sold all four sheep and with no other male members of the family (at the time of interview he had just had his tenth daughter) there were no possibilities of travel to either Chaghcharan or Iran in search of work. Furthermore, the rest of his irrigated land was cultivated with potato and the crop was doing well. He anticipated a yield of around 300 *man* of potato (one *man* is five kilograms). “If I had grown all of my land with potato I would have got 500 *man* and exchanged it for wheat.” The incidence of what were lone opium poppy plants, from seeds that had failed to germinate from the previous year’s crop (known as ‘volunteers’), within the fields of potato in the 2008 growing season would suggest that many of those in Sufak, as well as in other valleys to the north of the provincial capital of Chaghcharan, had made the decision to abandon opium poppy in favour of potato.

In the valley of Tasraghey to the south of the provincial centre of Chaghcharan, small plots of opium poppy could be seen scattered around the river—often in the same locations as they were in 2007 but fewer in number (see Illustration 4). These too had failed. The capsules were distorted and the root and leaves of the crop had yellowed and withered. The owner of one plot reported that he had lanced the crop three times and obtained “a little” opium. His father had now told him to cease harvesting the crop, as it was a waste of time. He reported that the last time they had received a good yield was four years previously, when they received around 7 kilograms per *jerib*.<sup>36</sup> In Angaran, small plots of opium poppy cultivation could be seen just off the main road. These, like others in the district of Chaghcharan, were being tended by children, some as young as four. Again, these crops yielded little.

<sup>36</sup> This respondent was first interviewed in 2005. At that time, he was cultivating opium poppy in the field rather than in what appears to be some residual land on the side of the river. In 2005, the crop, like so many that year, was failing and the respondent had hired a diesel pump to extract water to irrigate his crop.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Opium poppy cultivation in Ghor and the means by which it was reduced to such negligible levels stands out in stark contrast to Nangarhar. In Ghor, there was little interest in producing opium for the 2007/08 growing season. The coincidence of both falling yields and prices for opium had been conspiring against the crop for at least three years. When combined with the increase in wheat prices that Afghanistan experienced in 2008, the rationale for opium poppy cultivation ceased to exist for most farmers. Where opium poppy was cultivated in Ghor in 2008 it was grown on marginal land, by marginal groups, and produced marginal yields. The crop continues to disappoint those that did cultivate it, but they believed they had no other option. In this situation, the provincial and local authorities did not need to take a proactive role in deterring cultivation in Ghor and there is little evidence that they had done so in 2008.



**Illustration 4: Opium poppy cultivated along the rivers edge in Tasraghey, Chaghcharan**

The province of Nangarhar on the other hand shows a different route to achieving “poppy free” status. Here, the efforts of the governor and the provincial authorities have largely eliminated opium poppy from the province in the 2007/08 growing season. Focusing effort early in the season in areas where cultivation has typically persisted, even in previous years when cultivation in the rest of the province was low, was critical for the authorities to achieve their aim. Ensuring the acquiescence, if not the active support, of elders and *maliks* from among key tribes in the province served to demonstrate the determination of the authorities to uphold the ban and to weaken political opposition to its implementation. It also seems that succeeding in conflating the counter-insurgency effort with counter-narcotics in the minds of the local population was also instrumental in deterring cultivation in the first place. As such, the local authorities managed to raise the social costs that communities associated with opium poppy cultivation, leading them to believe that it might lead to increased foreign military presence, arrest and raids on household compounds—with all the cultural sensitivities that this might entail.

As such, Nangarhar and Ghor present with two very different pictures of what a “poppy free” province looks like. While both have negligible levels of cultivation, one has achieved it through a combination of coercion and persuasion, the other through a longer-term process of falling prices and yields and a change in the terms of trade between opium and wheat. One path has required aggressive action on behalf of the provincial authorities to prevent opium poppy cultivation in the first place. For the

other, the state has done very little either to deter cultivation or eliminate opium poppy once planted—it has been environmental and market processes that have simply taken effect. What remains unknown is whether these two provinces will remain “poppy free” in subsequent seasons or whether their status is only temporary, determined by events particular to the 2007/08 growing season. To determine this it is necessary to have a better understanding of how different socioeconomic groups and areas within these two provinces have coped with such negligible levels of cultivation in 2007/08 and whether any loss experienced is sufficient in both its severity and its distribution across the population to incite a political response that might ultimately challenge the authorities capacity to enforce a ban in 2008/09 and subsequent growing seasons.

## 4. The Impact of Being “Poppy Free”

As has been discussed, the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor achieved “poppy free” status in 2008 through very different processes. Similarly, the impact of being “poppy free” differs considerably, and not only between these two provinces—in the case of Nangarhar it differs by districts within the province. After all, some districts in Nangarhar had not cultivated opium poppy since the 2003/04 growing season, so what difference does the enforcement of a ban imposed across the province in 2008 have on their overall quality of life? This section looks at the socioeconomic and political impact of being “poppy free” in both Nangarhar and Ghor. It looks at how the populations in the different districts that were “poppy free” responded to the absence of opium poppy in the 2007/08 growing season and explores what these tell us about the likely sustainability of negligible levels of cultivation in subsequent years.

### 4.1 Responding to “poppy free” in Nangarhar

While Nangarhar as a province was declared “poppy free” in the 2007/08 growing season, a number of districts within that province had not grown opium poppy since 2003/04. Others, largely those with small landholdings in the more remote areas of the Spinghar piedmont, have had only brief respites from poppy cultivation—with some not even abandoning the crop in 2004/05 when the previous governor, Haji Din Mohammed, last imposed a ban on cultivation across the province. In fact, the last time some of the upper areas of Achin and Khogiani experienced such an emphatic reduction of opium poppy cultivation was in the 2000/01 growing season under the Taliban.

In looking at the impact of the ban on opium poppy cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season, it is necessary to distinguish between those areas where cultivation was largely abandoned over the previous few years and those in which it remained entrenched. It is also important to look at the wider range of shocks that households experienced in these areas during the 2007/08 growing season, how these differed by area and what responses households adopted in order to get a clearer understanding of how resilient different livelihood strategies are in these areas. What becomes evident from this work is the vulnerability of those households that largely rely on one single cash crop—either illegal, as in the case of opium, or legal, as in the case of onion—and the degree of resilience shown by those with greater diversification in both on-farm and off-farm income.

#### **“Poppy ban? What poppy ban?”**

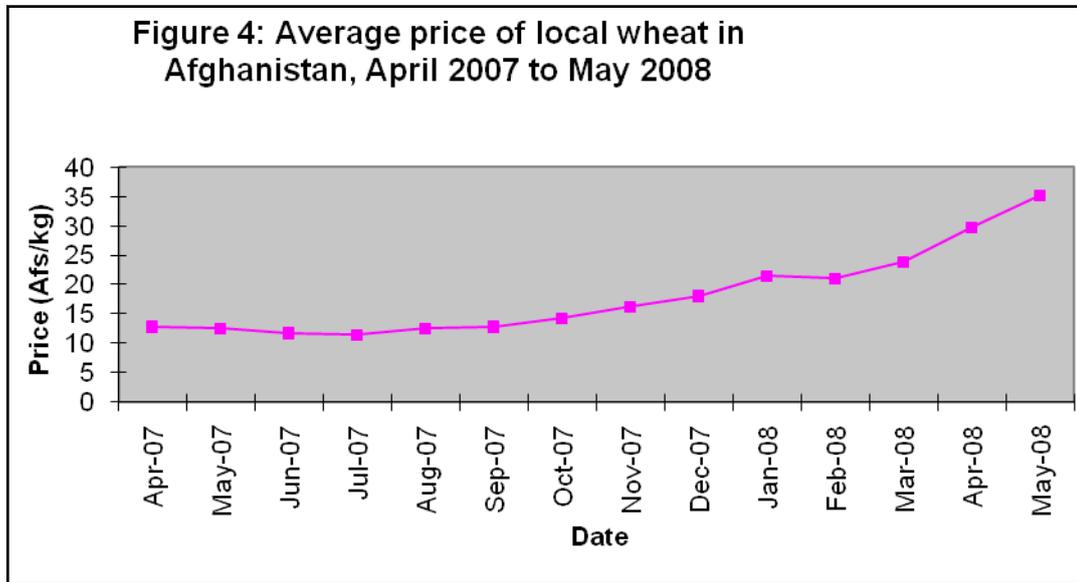
For those districts near the provincial centre, the ban on opium poppy cultivation in 2007/08 had a limited impact. These areas—districts like Kama and Surkhrud—had largely maintained negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation since 2005. Even in 2006/07 when there was a resurgence in cultivation in most districts across the province, cultivation in these two districts remained limited to a few small plots of less than a *biswa*. As such, in the 2007/08 growing season respondents in these districts largely continued cultivating a range of annual horticultural crops, some of which, particularly when intercropped, had proven more profitable than opium poppy.<sup>37</sup>

Instead, in the districts of Kama and Surkhrud it was the steep rise in the cost of food items, the collapse in the market price for onions and a deteriorating security situation that were of far greater concern to those interviewed than a ban on opium

---

<sup>37</sup> For more detail on the net returns on different crops and, more importantly, different cropping systems, see Mansfield, “Opium Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor”, 21-26.

poppy. However, even here the situation differed by location within the districts and socioeconomic groups. For example, in the lower part of Surkhrud and upper Kama there was far greater agricultural diversity than in the other parts of the district. Moreover, these areas typically do not cultivate “improved” onion (a higher-yielding variety). This left the population in these areas less exposed to the fall in the price of onion and more able to manage the rapid increase in the cost of living.



The increase in the cost of living, however, was seen as punitive across both districts and most of those interviewed did seem to hold the Government of Afghanistan responsible. The rise in wheat prices (see Figure 4) over the previous twelve months was always the first complaint, but the cost of other food items such as tea, cooking oil, sugar, rice and meat was also referred to as having a significant impact on the quality of life of the family. Wealthier respondents in these districts would often refer to the fact that they could continue to afford to eat largely to the standard that they had done the twelve months before as they had larger landholdings and a larger number of family members with non-farm income opportunities, including trade. They were, however, conscious of the fact that those who were landless or had small landholdings were not in such a privileged position and were seeing their standard of living deteriorate.

Respondents provided examples of fellow villagers who had gone without bread that day and had no obvious means with which to pay for food in the near future (see boxes over page). It was also recognised that for those dependent on daily wage labour, the rate of pay was typically insufficient to meet even the household’s wheat requirements: “If you work for two days it is not enough to buy one *seer* of wheat!”<sup>38</sup> In the district of Kama there was an example of a child being withdrawn from the equivalent of high school, and one case of a family sending a son to join the Afghan National Army (ANA) as a way of increasing income in the face of the dramatic increase in the cost of basic necessities.

These examples, however, came largely from lower Kama and upper Surkhrud, where the increase in the cost of living in 2008 was compounded by a fall in the price of “yellow” or “improved” onion in the 2006/07 growing season, a cash crop that had sold very well in 2005 and 2006. Reports suggested the price of “improved” onion had indeed

38 For instance, in the district of Kama daily wage labour rates were only 130 PR per day yet one *seer* of wheat flour would cost as much as 350 PR. Based on estimates that each family members consumes on average 400 grams of wheat flour per day, one day’s work would only be enough to feed a family of six, but only in bread.

fallen significantly between April 2007 and April 2008, largely due to over-production in the province of Nangarhar and neighbouring Laghman. While some farmers had managed to sell their crop early in the 2006/07 season at around 40 to 45 Pakistani Rupee (PR) per *seer*, others were not so fortunate and reported that they received between 12 and 20 PR per *seer* later in the harvest season—once the full extent of the crop in Nangarhar and Laghman had been realised. This was considered a significant fall from the price in April 2006 of 55 to 65 PR per *seer* of onion and an even longer drop from April 2005 when farmers had received between 110 and 120 PR (in 2008 US\$1 was worth 70 PR).

*“A few days ago a widow in my village came to my house and wanted maize. At that time I did not have maize and I told her that I could not help. She left without anything. The next day she came back to my house and told me that I had lied. She had heard from someone that I keep maize in my barrel for seed. She told me that I could buy seed when it was the season but she needed it now as her children had no bread. I usually get six seer of seed from this amount of maize, she got fifteen!”*

Respondent, Kama district, Nangarhar

The fall in the price of onion in 2008 left some farmers with a shortfall in cash income to see them through the winter just as the price of food items and agricultural inputs, such as fertiliser, increased so significantly. Furthermore, while the advance payments for onion, which had been so common in 2005 and 2006, were still in place at the time of fieldwork in April 2007, by 2008 many respondents complained that the traders that had come to the field prior to the harvest in the 2006/07 growing season, and promised total payments of between 25,000 and 40,000 PR for a *jerib* of onion, had subsequently not returned to collect the harvested crop.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, many of the farmers who believed they had sold their crop at a high price in the field were compelled to transport the onion crop to market themselves in May 2007. There were a few respondents in Kama that reported that they had sold their crop early before the price collapsed but these were very much in the minority.

*“I went to a shop in Fatehabad with my son. My son needs shoes but I have no money. The shopkeeper would not give me a loan. My son cried all the way home. When I returned home I saw my children, they too are in need of shoes and clothes. I also cry in my room thinking about our situation.”*

Respondent, Surkhrud district, Nangarhar

In fact, vegetable traders themselves reported heavy losses on purchases of onion from Surkhrud. One trader interviewed reported that he had purchased onion at the farm-gate prior to the harvest in 2007 at 30,000 PR per *jerib* only to sell the crop in the market at the equivalent of only 11,400 PR. Another trader reported that he and his two business partners had traded the equivalent of 68,000 *seers* of onion in 2007, more than they had traded in any year in the ten years they had been in business. This same trader went on to claim that they had lost 350,000 PR in 2007—most of it on the onion crop.

In lower Kama and upper Surkhrud, where onion was typically concentrated, this fall in the price of onion and the losses incurred by traders clearly had an impact on the onion crop in the 2007/08 growing season. Most respondents had reduced the amount of land they dedicated to onion and increased the amount of land they had cultivated with

<sup>39</sup> This was despite some of them giving advances of up to 5,000 PR per *jerib*.

wheat. However, by April 2008 all were complaining that traders had not as yet been to the field to purchase the crop and were becoming increasingly concerned that the price of onion would fall even further. There were also growing concerns about the lack of water in both areas, with crop failure being visible in some of the drier parts of upper Surkhurd.

To offset the fall in income that they had incurred in 2007 and to help meet the increase in the overall cost of living in 2008, respondents in lower Kama and upper Surkhurd adopted a number of different strategies. Most incurred debts over the winter period. These typically ranged from 10,000 to 40,000 PR. In upper Surkhurd some reflected on the ease with which they had obtained loans in the past when opium poppy had been cultivated in the district: “When we had poppy it was easy to get loans when we needed money if someone died, for weddings or if we needed other things—now it is not so easy.”

Those that took out these debts hoped to repay them later in the season once they had harvested their onion crop and had earned some money in Surkhurd, Peshawar or Kabul as wage labourers—often working in the brick kilns. It is interesting to note that none of those interviewed in these areas anticipated sending family members to Southern Afghanistan to work in the opium poppy harvest in 2008. This is despite the fact that respondents admitted that members of their families—and in some cases they themselves—had worked during the harvest season in Nangarhar in the 2006/07 growing season.

Although far fewer in number, early crops of spring onion in upper Surkhurd helped some respondents better manage their cash flow. These crops, planted in September and harvested in January, had sold for between 14,000 and 20,000 PR per *jerib* in 2008 and freed up land to be cultivated with a further crop, typically spinach.

Those in the upper part of Kama and in lower Surkhurd were not only largely insulated from the fall in onion prices but also from the impact of what would turn out to be a much drier year. Both areas showed much higher levels of agricultural diversification, both were well-irrigated and both were nearer the provincial centre, and therefore the markets, of Jalalabad. In the upper part of Kama, green bean was grown extensively in 2008.

In lower Surkhurd, okra was a popular cash crop in 2007/08. Respondents argued that the expansion of both crops was constrained largely by the shortage of family labour. However, these were not the only crops cultivated. In lower Surkhurd a number of those interviewed cultivated wheat, okra, *gandana*,<sup>40</sup> zucchini and a summer crop of both rice and maize. In upper Kama intercropping green bean, sugar cane and tomato was common. As with lower Surkhurd, where there is also a good supply of irrigation in the summer months, those in upper Kama also cultivate rice and maize as a second crop, as well some cauliflower.

In these parts of Kama and Surkhurd, opium poppy was very much forgotten. There was anxiety over the rise in the cost of living during 2007/08, but of much greater concern was how the particular tensions that were at that time concentrated in upper Surkhurd and lower Kama might subsequently spread right across the district if the economic situation in these areas deteriorated further. For example, in upper Surkhurd there was growing tension in areas neighbouring the district of Khogiani. Many blamed the ongoing instability in Khogiani and were worried that those that were opposing international

---

40 *Gandana* is a green salad crop of the *Allium* family.

forces and the Afghan Government might find a more fertile recruiting ground in upper Surkhrud due to the economic downturn. It was felt that these concerns were proven correct after there was a rocket attack on the district centre in Surkhrud at the beginning of April 2008.

In Kama District most people associated what they saw as quite a dramatic deterioration in the security situation with the establishment of a U.S. military base in the neighbouring Goshta District. This had led to anti-government elements entering the area, planting improvised explosive devices and attempting to attack the military convoys that moved through Kama. This had provoked a reaction from the U.S. military and it was reported that only two weeks prior to fieldwork two Afghan nationals had been shot by U.S. forces in lower Kama. Those interviewed were rather sceptical that those who were killed did in fact belong to anti-government elements and raised concerns over the tactics used to deal with them, as well as the implications that it had for their own security:

*No one knows who these people are but they are Afghan. They may be Taliban, they may be opposite with the government, but they may have reason. They should talk with them and ask 'why are you opposite with government'. Bombing and killing [these people] is not good*  
(Respondent in Kama district, Nangarhar)

*Now we have a big problem. Every time there is a bomb attack US forces come here and collect people together and ask us, "why do you allow these people to come to your village?" But no one knows who these people are.*  
(Respondent in Kama district, Nangarhar)

In the context of these more pressing security issues and an economic downturn in some areas due to rising cost of food, and what many saw as the collapse in the price of improved onion, the ban on opium poppy in the 2007/08 growing season was seen as rather inconsequential. In fact, the only way that it indirectly affected households in these districts was in the contraction of employment opportunities during the opium poppy harvest. However, even here the impact would not seem to have been significant across the district, given that only three of those interviewed in these districts commented that members of their family no longer went to neighbouring areas to harvest the crop.

### ***To have and then to have not***

The impact of the ban on opium poppy cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season was far more significant in the districts of Shinwar, Achin and Khogiani—after all, these were the areas that cultivated the crop extensively the year before.<sup>41</sup> The population in these three districts also had to contend with the increase in the cost of the living that those in Kama and Surkhrud experienced, as well as lower levels of precipitation in some areas, such as the lower parts of Achin and Khogiani.

Responses to the ban on opium poppy in Achin, Khogiani and Shinwar differed little by area and socioeconomic group. Largely respondents reacted, as we have seen with previous bans on cultivation, by simply replacing the land that had been cultivated with opium poppy in 2006/07 with wheat in 2007/08. There were few exceptions to this particular model of substitution among those interviewed in Achin and Khogiani, and although there were more examples of crop diversification in Shinwar, these were not in the majority.

---

41 UNODC estimated that 1,797 ha of opium were cultivated in Achin, 3,253 ha in Khogiani and 2,218 ha in Shinwar. UNODC/MCN Afghanistan, "Opium Survey, 2008," 177.

With the loss of income from opium poppy and its replacement with wheat, many of those interviewed claimed that they were experiencing a lower standard of living in 2008 than in 2007, reducing their consumption of meat and fruit, as well as accessing health care through the local pharmacy rather than using doctors when family members were sick. The increase in the price of wheat imposed a particular hardship, with the vast majority of households interviewed unable to meet their wheat requirements from their own land, despite most of them monocropping wheat during the winter months.

For the majority of farmers interviewed in Achi, Khogiani and the upper parts of Shinwar, an increase in wheat price was not a benefit, as they could not produce a surplus for sale. Instead, they were faced with a significant increase in the cost of their wheat deficit. Consequently, as with the farmers in lower Kama and upper Surkhrud, households in Achin, Shinwar and Khogiani faced the dual problem of a dramatic increase in the cost of living at the same time as a rapid fall in family income. In both lower Khogiani and Achin, households also faced the prospect of a drier summer and much lower yields, if any, from their summer cash crops such as tomato, ground nut and marijuana.

It has to be remembered that for many of those living in these districts opium poppy is not just a source of on-farm income, it also provides daily wage labour opportunities in weeding and harvesting on other's land, as well as having a wider effect on the local economy. In the 2006/07 growing season daily wage labour rates for weeding were between 180-200 PR, and harvesting paid between 350 PR and 450 PR per day. In Achin, Khogiani and Shinwar respondents reported that family members had worked in both their own districts and neighbouring districts during the weeding and harvestings season. One respondent reported that his two sons had both worked for 20 days at a rate of 350 PR per day for a total of 14,000 PR. He, like many others, placed a premium on the fact that opium poppy had provided local work, allowing his sons to live with the family for much of the year rather than forcing family members to go elsewhere to find work.

The elimination of opium poppy in 2007/08 led to a fall in both on-farm and off-farm income for the majority of those in the districts of Achin, Khogiani and Shinwar. Many of those interviewed subsequently had to sell their assets in order to afford the dramatic increase in the cost of living. Opium sales were of course common. Many argued that they had already sold much, if not all, of their crop from the 2006/07 harvest. In areas where landholdings were small and family sizes large there was little reason to doubt this, particularly given the sale of long-term productive assets such as livestock, the mortgaging of land, and reports of younger male family members being sent to join the ANA (some of them being withdrawn from school to do so). Others reported that they had tried to sell their opium, fearful of what they believed to be an increase in the number of raids on houses by U.S. forces.

The price received for the sale of opium varied depending on when the crop was sold, with those who sold at harvest or soon after receiving the lower price of around 6,000 PR per *seer*<sup>42</sup> while those who sold later in the season, when supply was scarcer, obtained around 11,000 PR per *seer*. Some commented that they could not take advantage of the sale of their entire harvest as they were either sharecroppers on the land and had to give half of the final yield to the landowner, or they owed opium against the advance payment they had received earlier in the season, a system known in both eastern and southern Afghanistan as *salaam*. Others referred to the payments that they had made to fellow villagers as compensation for the loss of their crop during the eradication campaign in 2007. For example, one respondent in lower Shinwar reported that 13 *seer*

---

42 In Nangarhar a *seer* of opium is the equivalent of 1.2 kilograms.

of opium poppy had been collected to compensate one villager for the loss of two *jeribs* of land in 2007. This constituted a payment of around three *kartoos* of opium for each of the households in the village that had grown opium. Other villagers reported paying up to five *kartoos* of opium in compensation to their fellow villagers.

An option that many households pursued in these three districts in tandem to opium sales was the search for non-farm income opportunities. Many were of the view that there were far fewer local employment opportunities in 2008 than there were in the 2006/07 growing season. Interviews with labourers in Jalalabad and Markoh in Shinwar district confirmed this. This concerned not just the wage labour associated with opium poppy but that which related to the wider economy. Respondents claimed that there was far less employment in construction related to house improvements in the villages as well as in the district centre.

This was a point that was confirmed through talking to local shopkeepers and traders in the provincial centre of Jalalabad, Markoh in the district of Shinwar, and Kahi in Achin district (See Table 1). While some of these businesses did report an increase in the value of their total sales, and many did not experience the kind of downturn in sales they had experienced during the last opium poppy ban in 2004/05, this was only due to inflation occurring in 2007/08. In fact, in each business, profits were reported to be at their lowest in five years and two businesses had closed altogether. The hotelier interviewed in Kahi in Achin reported that two of the four hotels in the district centre were now closed. He blamed this directly on the loss of trade associated with the ban on opium poppy.

The situation was even more difficult for those without land. For example, many of the labourers interviewed in Jalalabad who were looking for work in April 2008 had obtained land as sharecroppers in a variety of districts in Nangarhar the previous year, as well as working during the opium harvest for up to a month in 2007. However, with the demise of opium poppy in 2007/08 and its replacement by wheat—a far less labour intensive crop—they found themselves no longer required and on the streets of Jalalabad looking for work, work that was much harder to find: “Every day I come to the *chawk* but I find only ten days in thirty.” Moreover, respondents claimed that despite the increase in the cost of living, wage labour rates in Jalalabad had remained static at 150 PR for unskilled work until February, when they rose to 200 PR per day to reflect, in part, the increase in the cost of living.

Opportunities to work in the southern provinces of Afghanistan even appeared less numerous in 2008 and not as well paid as they had been the previous year. There were still “guarantors”<sup>43</sup> in Markoh in Shinwar and Jalalabad looking to hire wage labourers for the harvest in Helmand and Kandahar, as there had been in April 2007. However, the wage labour rates being offered were much lower, with some offering as little as 300 PR per day compared to up to 1,000 PR per day for the same time the previous year. Some of those interviewed in Jalalabad were holding out until they were offered 500 PR per day. At the same time, the dangers of working in the South had become increasingly obvious. In some cases, fathers of respondents had forbidden their sons to go to the South fearful of their safety.

---

43 The families of these “guarantors” typically originate from the eastern provinces but received land under the canals in Helmand in the 1970s. These individuals use their links to the east to recruit labourers for the opium harvest in the southern provinces, sometimes transporting them from Jalalabad, Markoh in Shinwar district or the village where they have been recruited. Wage labour rates are agreed and guaranteed and can be paid once the labourer has finished the harvest and returned to the east, where it is paid by a money changer, known as a *hawaladar*. This reduces the risk of not being paid, or robbery on the homeward journey—a relatively frequent complaint by those who take employment during the harvest in the South and do not have a “guarantor.”

Table 1: Business Profiles, Nangarhar 2004-2008 (Continued over page)

Location	Type of Business	Indicator	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Jalalabad	Hotel	Wholesale	15,000 - 20,000 PR/day	12,000 PR/day	10,000 PR/day	10,000 – 12,000 PR/day	12,000 – 16,000 PR/day
		Employed	6	4	4	5	
	Clothes	Wage Rate	100 - 150 PR/day	100 – 120 PR/day	80 – 120 PR/day	120-160 PR/day	
		Wholesale	20,000 - 30,000 PR/day	10,000 - 15,000 PR/day	5,000 – 7000 PR/day	7,000 PR/day	5,000 PR/day
	General store	Profit	10,000 PR/day	7,000 - 8,000 PR/day	3,000 – 4000 PR/day	5,000 – 6,000 PR/day	
		Capital	500 PR/day	300 PR/day	0	400-500 PR/day	
	Tractor	Owed			140,000 PR	80,000 PR	
		Debt			150,000 PR	180,000 PR	
	Cars	Sales/month	20 tractors	10 tractors	10 tractors	12 tractors	15 tractors
		Sales/year	140 threshers	70 threshers	140 threshers	120 threshers	130 Threshers
Marko	Hotel	Sales/month	30 cars	13 cars	5 cars	10 cars	15 cars
		Wholesale	10,000 PR/day	6,000 PR/day	4,000 PR/day	5,000-6,000 PR/day	4,000 PR/day
	Clothes	Profit	2,000 PR/day	1,000 - 1,200 PR/day	600 PR/day	800 –1,200 PR/day	600-700 PR/day
		Employed	4	4	4	4	4
	Electrical and Paint	Wage Rate	200 – 250 PR/day	100 – 150 PR/day	50 – 100 PR/day	80-150 PR/day	100-150 PR/day
		Wholesale	15,000 – 20,000 PR/day	10,000 PR/day	3,000 – 4,000 PR/day	6,000-9,000 PR/day	4,000 – 5,000 PR/day
	Clothes	Profit			600,000 PR	700-850 PR/day	400-500 PR/day
		Capital			300,000 PR	700,000 PR	800,000 PR
	Electrical and Paint	Owed			90,000 PR	360,000 PR	300,000 PR
		Debt				180,000 PR	300,000 PR
Electrical and Paint	Electrical and Paint	Wholesale	8,000 - 10,000 PR/day	6,000 PR/day	3,500 PR/day	6,000 –8,000 PR/day	4,000-5,000 PR/day
		Profit	500 - 600 PR/day	350 PR/day	200 PR/day	600-700 PR/day	200-300 PR/day
Electrical and Paint	Electrical and Paint	Capital			500,000 PR	500,000 PR	500,000 PR
		Owed			200,000 PR	180,000 PR	150,000 PR
Electrical and Paint	Electrical and Paint	Debt			55,000 PR	60,000 PR	100,000 PR

Table 1: Business Profiles, Nangarhar 2004-2008 (Continued)

Location	Type of Business	Indicator	Year				
			2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Kahli	General Store	Wholesale	6,000 PR/day	2,500 PR/day	1,000 - 1,500 PR/day	5-6000 PR/day	10,000 PR/day
		Profit	400 - 600 PR/day	200 - 250 PR/day	150 PR/day	1,000 PR/day	500-600 PR/day
		Capital Owed Debt			400,000 PR 250,000 PR 85,000 PR	500,000 PR 350,000 PR 200,000 PR	1,100,000 700,000 300,000
Kahli	Hotel	Wholesale	4,000 PR/day	2,000 PR/day	2,700 PR/day	3,000 - 3,500 PR/day	2,200 PR/day
		Profit Owed Debt	500 PR/day	150 - 300 PR/day	400-500 PR/day 34,000 PR	800-1,000 PR/day	200 PR/day
						60,000 PR	
Kahli	Cloth	Wholesale	20,000 - 22,000 PR/day	5,000 - 6,000 PR/day	2,000 PR/day	Closed to harvest opium poppy	Closed
		Profit Capital Owed	4,000 - 5,000 PR/day	500 - 700 PR/day	200 - 250 PR/day 300,000 PR 80,000 PR		
Kahli	Vegetable	Wholesale	4,000 PR/day	3,000 PR/day	1,500 PR/day	3,500 -4,000 PR/day	2,500 PR/day
		Profit Capital Owed Debt	300 - 400 PR/day	250 PR/day	100 PR/day 30,000 PR 20,000 PR	400 PR/day 50,000 PR 50,000 PR	200-250 PR/day 25,000 PR 60,000 PR 49,000 PR

Similarly, respondents claimed that in 2008 employment in Pakistan had become less of an option for those looking for non-farm income. This, they suggested, had become more difficult due to the introduction of rules in 2007 that required all Afghans living in Pakistan to obtain a Pakistani Identity card. Without this they were not legally entitled to stay and work. This left those working in Pakistan without identity cards exposed to greater risks and, many argued, costs, since being caught without a card did not automatically lead to expulsion, but a bribe would have to be paid. A respondent in lower Shinwar provided an example of the direct impact the introduction of these new rules had, reporting that his three brothers had taken a pay cut of 2,000 PR per month each because their existing employer in Karachi required them to have identity cards whilst their new employer was not concerned about their legal status in Pakistan.



Illustration 5: Taro grown in lower Shinwar, Nangarhar

With the overall contraction in non-farm income opportunities a number of respondents opted to send member of their families to the ANA. In each of the districts where opium poppy had been grown in 2007 there were a growing number of examples of this, but it was in Khogiani where the incidence was highest. Typically, respondents reported that they had sent their sons or brothers to join the ANA—most doing so after the planting season for the 2007/08 crop. Some claimed that they had sent sons aged between 15 and 16, despite the fact that they were too young to join legally. A number of respondents in Shinwar and in Khogiani claimed to have sent family members to join the army two months prior to the fieldwork—some of these had been withdrawn from school to do so.

A further sign of economic stress was the sale of long-term productive assets, including livestock and land. The sale of livestock was evident across all three districts. The sale of dairy cows was normally reported, with prices ranging from 20,000-27,000 PR each. These sales were largely concentrated among respondents with smaller landholdings and therefore lower levels of opium poppy cultivation the previous year. The same was true of the three respondents who had mortgaged land in 2008. One of these respondents reported that he had mortgaged all three *jeribs* of the land that he owned in Achin for only 70,000 PR, leaving him to sharecrop land in Shinwar—where in the 2007/08 growing season he had monocropped wheat and consequently saw little chance of getting his land back.

Within this overall environment of economic decline, there were some positive signs. After all, not everyone who had abandoned opium poppy in 2007/08 responded by cultivating

wheat—some diversification did take place. For example, in the canal irrigated area of Shinwar there was greater evidence of onion (in this case red onion) and an expansion in taro, known locally as “english potato.”<sup>44</sup> This crop was planted in February or March and harvested in October (see Illustration 5). Those that cultivated it claimed that they had learned of it from farmers and traders in the district of Lalpur, but reported that the crop had first been introduced in the district of Mohamand Dara ten years before. The demand for it was such that traders purchased the crop at the farm-gate, paying as much as 51,000 PR per *jerib*, and then transported it to Pakistan for sale. Even in Khogiani one farmer had decided to “find a way” without opium by planting tomato early in an attempt to take advantage of higher off-season prices. There were also signs of the uptake of fruit trees in Achin with three respondents reporting that they had planted almonds and pomegranates in the last twelve months.

In each of these cases, respondents had larger than average landholdings and better access to non-farm income opportunities than others in the area. For instance, a farmer in Khogiani had nine *jeribs* of land in the upper part of the district as well as salaries from family members: one who was a teacher (3,000 Afs per month); one a private doctor (15,000 PR per month); another a mechanic (10,000 PR month); and a brother who was a soldier in the ANA (5,000 Afs per month). It should be of no surprise that those who are most adept at managing the impact of the ban in these areas are those with larger landholdings (and therefore larger inventories of opium) and with greater access to non-farm income opportunities, as well as the available development inputs.

However, cases of agricultural diversification were very much in the minority in these areas. The typical response that was seen in the past during previous opium bans in Nangarhar Province was still the most prevalent. Yet there was widespread recognition that replacing opium poppy with wheat was not a viable strategy and that other sources of income would be required to meet the family’s food requirements, particularly during a year in which food prices had risen so steeply, not to mention the need to cover other costs such as healthcare and fuel. The sale of assets such as opium, livestock and in some cases the mortgaging of land have also been witnessed in the past as responses to a ban on opium.. So, to some extent, is the enlisting of male family members in the Afghan Security Forces. However, while in the 2004/05 growing season respondents typically reported sending their sons and brothers to join the Afghan National Police, in 2007/08 it is the army that was the preferred force, largely reflecting the higher rate of pay that comes with fighting in the southern provinces.

As with Kama and Surkhrud, the economic downturn in Achin, Shinwar and Khogiani in 2008 was associated with a rise in criminality. However, as opposed to Kama and Surkhrud, this criminality was not merely potential but had already begun to occur in the districts of Shinwar, Achin and Khogiani—perhaps reflecting the extent of the recession in these areas. Reports of roadside robberies in Khogiani were common—just prior to fieldwork a roadside robbery had resulted in the death of a driver in the upper part of Khogiani. This was widely known and respondents across the district of Khogiani referred to it. Other incidents were also cited and many were of the view that it was no longer safe to travel at dusk or to leave the house at night. Similar incidents were reported in the district of Shinwar along with reports of armed robberies on houses during the night. A respondent in upper Khogiani reported that armed men had approached him the previous month when he had left his house at night to irrigate his land. He was not

---

44 One respondent had intercropped his Taro with opium poppy the year before. He claimed that his opium poppy had been eradicated in April 2007. He had requested that the eradication team allowed him to destroy his own crop so that his Taro would not be destroyed as well. The team declined but the respondent managed to recover his Taro by irrigating the crop.

sure whether these men were potential thieves or “Taliban”, but he was now fearful of leaving his house and reported that he had elected to miss his “turn” for irrigation the last time it had fallen at night.

The belief that these kinds of incidents would increase as the season progressed and the population’s economic position grew worse only added to people’s fears. Many attributed these incidents to the number of unemployed young men in the villages. It was also common to hear people suggest that men in Afghan National Police uniforms, under the guise of a police raid, had committed some of the robberies.

The resentment toward the government was palpable in each of the districts where the ban on opium poppy had been enforced. The authorities were held responsible for the ban on opium poppy, the rise in the cost of living and the failure to deliver the jobs and development assistance that those interviewed claimed had been promised in return for the cessation of opium poppy cultivation that season, and subsequently the rise in insecurity. This resentment culminated in one of the very *maliks* whose support it was claimed had been instrumental to implementing the opium poppy ban, making a public statement against the authorities (see box below).

The belief that the government was failing to take action to prevent a deterioration in both the economy and the security situation prompted many to claim that the “government has become weak”—an irony given that it was a “strong government” that was believed to be responsible for imposing such a comprehensive ban on opium poppy cultivation in the 2007/08 growing season. It was also a widely held view among those interviewed that opium poppy cultivation would return to the districts of Achin, Khogiani and Shinwar, as well others, in the 2008/09 growing season. If so, Nangarhar’s “poppy free” status would be rescinded.

*“Last week the provincial council invited all the elders from Nangarhar. They told us about their activities over the last year. A Malik stood up and went to the stage without being invited, without any turn. He stood at the microphone and told the council, ‘yes you are ministers and yes your head is a chief minister but we don’t know which type of minister and chief minister you are. For three months I have come here and I want to talk to the governor but you don’t have any authority. Every time I come here and explain to you our problems you say we should discuss the problem with the governor. You were not even able to make an appointment with the Governor. You are not a minister you are a thief! You put everything in your pocket. I saw you before you had this job. You did not have anything but now everyone has a land cruiser and a large house. From where did you get this money? In my area I have a neighbour who for the last three days did not have bread for his children. You tell him that you are ministers. What is your response to your people? You show me this government building but what do you do by this building? You just you sit in this building.’”*

Respondent in Nangarhar

## 4.2 Being “poppy free” in Ghor

There could not be a bigger contrast between the “poppy free” situations of Nangarhar than Ghor. In the province of Ghor there was little sense of “the loss” of the benefits of opium poppy cultivation as none of those interviewed had associated the crop with

economic gain for the last four years. The incidence of disease that has been visible since at least 2005<sup>45</sup> was still evident and the crop continued to fail in 2008 (see Illustration 6). As discussed in a previous section, those that did continue to cultivate opium poppy did so because they had few options to generate a cash income. These households were not only economically marginal but were only a few in number.

The far bigger concern in the province of Ghor was not the ban on opium poppy cultivation but a combination of: the loss of livestock that many had experienced during what had been a particularly harsh winter; the rapid rise in wheat prices they had experienced over the previous twelve months, 2007 to 2008; and the drier conditions being experienced in many of the valleys, particularly those to the north of the provincial centre of Chaghcharan.



**Illustration 6: Diseased opium poppy capsule in Dawlat Yat, July 2008**

In fact, crops were struggling in each of the valleys visited. Qartoos and Kasi to the north of Chaghcharan were exceptionally dry and no rainfed wheat was visible at all. The small patches of opium poppy that had been grown had already failed and the potato crop was anticipated to produce a significantly lower yield than in 2007. Indeed, one respondent in Qartoos reported that he had obtained 1,200 *man*<sup>46</sup> from the two *jeribs* of potato that he had cultivated the year before. He reported selling 1,000 *man* in 2007 at 60 Afs per kilogram, generating 60,000 Afs of cash income. In 2008, he anticipated getting only 400 *man* of potato from the same land. In Shinya, in Dawlat Yar, the potato crop was faring even worse and there were a number of fields that could be seen to have failed altogether (see Figure 17). Some farmers could be seen using pumps to extract water from the village with which to irrigate their potato given that it had reached a critical stage in its growth. Others protested that the increase in the cost of diesel and the fall in the water level had made this prohibitively expensive.

In Kasi, respondents complained that much of the wheat crop cultivated on the irrigated land had only received a single irrigation this season. Many complained that the crop would not produce much grain and would serve mainly for straw for animals. In all of the other villages covered by the fieldwork the irrigated wheat was doing relatively well and respondents anticipated yields of between 350 and 500 kg. In these particular areas, the bigger concern

was the rainfed area where respondents did not anticipate good yields due to insufficient spring rains. Reductions in wheat yields and the subsequent loss of wheat straw were matched by reductions in *kalool*, another crop used for animal feed.<sup>47</sup>

45 David Mansfield, "Opium Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor," 35-36.

46 In Ghor one *man* is the equivalent of five kilograms.

47 One respondent reported that they had grown three *jeribs* of the *kalool* in 2007, selling 200 *man*, the

It is in the livestock sector, not in opium poppy cultivation, that many farmers in the Province of Ghor felt the real loss in 2008. On average, those interviewed that owned livestock claimed that they had lost 50-60 percent of their herds due to the extreme cold in the winter of 2007/08. There were, however, some examples of those interviewed losing considerable more—for example, one such respondent in Qartoos reported that he had only two sheep left out of the twenty that he had at the onset of winter.

Yet, this loss of livestock did not correspond with an increase in prices as might be expected by such a significant contraction in supply. Instead, there were reports that a sheep selling for 2,200 Afs in July 2007 obtained only 800 Afs in the market in July 2008. This was blamed on the shortage of fodder, and the number of livestock sales as households sought finance to purchase the food deficits they were experiencing. With smaller herds, lower livestock prices and significantly higher food prices, many families were compelled to try to increase the number of family members working in Chaghcharan and Iran so that they could meet their food needs prior to the winter season. Indeed, a number of respondents reported that they or a member of their family would migrate to Iran to find work once the wheat harvest was complete and return in the fall.

At least there were reports of positive developments with regard to employment opportunities. This was primarily due to the increase in wage labour opportunities in the city of Chaghcharan itself. In fact, there were signs of significantly more construction than in previous years with the building of a new provincial headquarters for the Afghan National Police, a high school and a bridge on the main road through the city. Daily wage labour rates for unskilled work remained unchanged from 2007 at 150 Afs per day. There were also reports that the Iranian authorities were no longer clamping down so vigorously on Afghan migrant workers across the border, as they had been doing in July 2007. There were still reports of fellow villagers and relatives being sent back but there was a sense that this was not as regular as it had been in the past.

As opposed to Nangarhar, respondents in Ghor did not even report the indirect effect of the loss of employment during the opium harvest due to the negligible level of opium poppy cultivation in the province. This was primarily because opium poppy had always been a marginal crop in these parts of Ghor, typically managed by family labour. It was only in Charsadda, to the north of the district of Chaghcharan, where there were reports in the past of farmers hiring wage labourers during the opium harvest, and none of those interviewed reported that they had travelled there in previous years to find work. Iran was very much the preferred destination for migrant labour from the districts of Chaghcharan and Dawlat Yar.

---

equivalent of 1,000 kg, at 50 Afs per man for a total of 10,000 Afs. In 2008, he had not cultivated *kalool* at all due to the dry conditions in the valley. In Tasraghey, the *kalool* had not produced any grain at all, only straw, reducing its saleable and use value.

## 5. Conclusion

UNODC first introduced the term “poppy free provinces” in 2007. It served as a useful measure of the geographic distribution of opium poppy at a time when the majority of media commentators and policy analysts were focusing largely on the aggregate level of cultivation and its year on year increases. As a measure, it showed that even though the total amount of land grown with opium poppy was increasing at the national level, it was not increasing across all provinces and in fact was being abandoned in a growing number of areas in Afghanistan. To some extent, the introduction of this measure forced commentators to begin to explore the diversity in the levels of opium poppy cultivation that exists in Afghanistan. It was no longer acceptable to simply report that cultivation had increased; for the first time the media and policy narratives had to say where, and increasingly, why.

Of course this in turn has had its own disadvantages. Too often the persistence of cultivation in the South is solely attributed to the Taliban and the funding of the insurgency rather than an understanding of the prevailing levels of insecurity that have proven to be advantageous for a range of different state, non-state and anti-state actors alike. The negative impact that this insecurity has on market access, social protection and the provision of basic goods and services to rural communities is neglected in favour of explanations that portray all farmers in the South as greedy and rich.

The same can be true of areas that now cultivate negligible levels of opium poppy—the “poppy free” provinces. It is often assumed that this reduction in cultivation was the result of the counter-narcotics efforts of the government: a combination of information operations and effective eradication. As this report and other work by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit<sup>48</sup> have shown, in some cases this is true but it is not the situation across all “poppy free” provinces.

For example, longitudinal research in Ghor documents how it has been the shift in the terms of trade between opium poppy and wheat in this low yielding area that has led to opium poppy being largely abandoned—and not the efforts of the local authorities. Clearly there is a need for far greater differentiation when discussing not only levels of cultivation—be they “poppy free” or prolific—but the reasons for either reductions or increases in the amount of opium produced in a given area.

The need for this more in-depth understanding of causal factors, at a more disaggregated level than the province, is perhaps best highlighted when exploring the impact that being “poppy free” has across the different districts in Nangarhar in the 2007/08 growing season. For example, it is clear that in those districts like Kama and Surkhrud that are nearer the provincial centre of Jalalabad in Nangarhar the ban on opium poppy in 2007/08 had little impact.

What was far more important in these districts was the dramatic increases in the cost of living, in particular the price of wheat, and the fall in the price of “improved” onion in 2006/07. Even here the impact was more localised: in areas within these districts that were nearer the provincial centre—where irrigation was more readily available and where there was far greater crop diversification—the rise in the cost of living could be better managed.

However, in areas that had cultivated opium poppy in Nangarhar in the 2006/07 growing

---

48 Adam Pain, *Let Them Eat Promises*.

season being, “poppy free” had a far more far-reaching impact on the population. In these areas, the loss of opium poppy in the 2007/08 growing season led to a fall in on- and off-farm income with the demise of wage labour opportunities associated with the weeding and harvest of the opium crop, as well as the knock on effect that the ban on opium had on the wider economy.

While the sale of opium from the previous year provided a flow of income, the dramatic increase in the price of basic food items and the fact that many farmers had monocropped wheat in 2007/08 meant that many farmers in the districts of Achin, Khogiani and even Shinwar faced financial difficulties even in the spring of 2008

While there were some signs of crop diversification among farmers with larger landholdings and better access to non-farm income opportunities, for the majority the market for both cash crops and daily wage labour opportunities was seen as far more limited. This led to a rise in the incidence of sales of long-term productive assets and increasing numbers of family members being sent to join the Afghan National Army (with some of them being withdrawn from school to do so) as farmers sought to meet their household expenses—all signs of economic distress.

The impact that this deteriorating economic situation would in turn appear to have on the political situation in these particular areas is of real concern. There was growing resentment towards the government for what was believed to be a failure to address the rise in the cost of living, to deliver the jobs and development assistance that it was claimed they had promised in return for the cessation of opium poppy cultivation that season, and to tackle the growing levels of criminality that were largely attributed to the economic crisis. In these areas the “failures” were all seen as signs that the government was “weak”—an irony given that it was a “strong government” that was believed to be responsible for imposing such a comprehensive ban on opium poppy cultivation earlier in the 2007/08 growing season.

What can be seen from a more disaggregated analysis of the impact of a province being “poppy free” is that the population of some districts within a province have viable alternatives to opium poppy cultivation while others do not. After all, those areas near the provincial centre not only have better access to labour and agricultural commodity markets, but also access to irrigation, while land and personal security is often more assured. A ban on opium poppy cultivation goes largely unnoticed, and even where there is a deterioration in the economic situation due to other factors, it is not necessarily directly blamed on the government. The same cannot be said of the more remote areas in Nangarhar where opium poppy has been concentrated and where small landholdings, high population densities, and high transport costs all mitigate against the diversification of on-farm and non-farm income opportunities. The cessation of opium here not only imposes an economic cost on the population, it also exacts a political cost on those who imposed the ban.

Given this level of diversity within a province like Nangarhar, it is one thing to measure the number of “poppy free” provinces but there are dangers in encouraging an increase in the number of “poppy free” provinces regardless of context and impact. Yet there are indications that this is what is happening and what was initially a measure of distribution, “poppy free” provinces, is in danger of becoming a target in its own right, regardless of context or the implications that pursuing such a strategy might have on the wider effort aimed at improving governance, security and economic growth.<sup>49</sup> There are even those

---

49 For example, “The goal for 2008 was to make many more provinces, and especially Nangarhar

in Kabul that are suggesting that in the 2009/10 growing season as many as twenty-eight provinces could become opium poppy free were the right actions to be taken.

While the notion of “poppy free” is perhaps a laudable ambition in the general sense that it encourages analysis of local level variation in cultivation patterns, the analysis presented here suggests policymakers should be wary of pursuing an increase the number of “poppy free” provinces regardless of the consequence for the rural population in those areas. It should be recognised that there is a growing consensus amongst policymakers around the fact that aggregate eradication targets and other coercive measures can be unhelpful and that as an intervention, crop destruction will only serve to deter future opium poppy cultivation if households have viable alternatives. At such a time, it would therefore be counterproductive to pursue an increase in the number of “poppy free” provinces (which may well entail eradication in areas where viable alternatives do not exist) without a clear understanding of the political and economic ramifications of such a move across the different and disparate communities within a province.

---

and Badakhshan opium free. This has been achieved. The goal for 2009 should be to win back Farah and Nimroz...” UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008,” Executive Summary, page vii; “the number of opium poppy free provinces may increase to twenty-two if timely and appropriate [opium] poppy eradication measures are implemented in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Herat and Faryab,” UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Winter Assessment,” i and 1. Table 1 goes on to say that “[Baghlan and Herat] provinces can become poppy free if timely eradication activities are implemented” and that “Badakhshan and Faryab provinces can become poppy free if the spring opium cultivation is controlled.”

## References

Berg, Bruce. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc, 2007.

Gootenberg, Paul. “Talking Like a State” in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders and the other Side of Globalisation*. Edited by William van Schendel and Itty Abraham. Indiana University Press, 2005.

Mansfield, David and Adam Pain. *Counter Narcotics in Afghanistan: The Failure of Success?* Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008.

Mansfield, David. “Opium Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor.” Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2006.

Mansfield, David and Adam Pain. “Opium Poppy Eradication: How do you raise risk where there is nothing to lose?” Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2006.

Mansfield, David. “Resurgence and Reductions: Explanations for Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor in 2005-2007.” Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008.

Mansfield, David. “Resurgence and Reductions: Explanations for Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor in 2006-07.” Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008.

Mansfield, David. “Sustaining the Decline? Understanding the Changes in Opium Poppy Cultivation in the 2008/09 Growing Season.” A report for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government (ADIDU: Forthcoming, May 2009).

Pain, Adam. “Let Them Eat Promises”: Closing the Opium Poppy Fields in Balkh and its Consequences.” Kabul: Afghanistan Research Unit, 2008.

Potter, Fabrice. “Opium in Afghanistan: A Reality Check” in *Afghanistan: Now You see Me?* London: March 2009, LSE Strategic Update.

Rubin, Bruce and Jake Sherman. “Counter Narcotics to Stabilise Afghanistan: The False Promise of Crop Eradication” New York: Centre for International Cooperation at New York University, 2008.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Annual Opium Survey, 1997” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 1997).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics. “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2007.” Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2007.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics. “Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2008.” .Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2008.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/Ministry of Counter Narcotics. “Afghanistan Opium Winter Assessment.” Kabul: UNODC/MCN, January 2009.

## Recent Publications from AREU

- May 2009            Between Discipline and Discretion: Policies Surrounding Senior Subnational Appointments, by Martine van Bijlert
- April 2009            Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy: Challenges and Opportunities for Strengthening Licit Agricultural Livelihoods, by Alan Roe
- April 2009            Interrogating Irrigation Inequalities: Canal Irrigation Systems in Injil District, Heart, by Srinivas Chokkakula
- April 2009            Water, Opium and Livestock: Findings from the First Year of Farm and Household Monitoring, by Alan Roe
- April 2009            Afghanistan Research Newsletter 21
- April 2009            Water Strategy Meets Local Reality, by Kai Wegerich
- April 2009            Land Conflict in Afghanistan: Building Capacity to Address Vulnerability, by Colin Deschamps and Alan Roe
- April 2009            Reflections on the Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan, by Rebecca Roberts
- April 2009            Policymaking in Agriculture and Rural Development in Afghanistan, by Adam Pain and Sayed Mohammad Shah
- April 2009            Mutual Accountability in Afghanistan: Promoting Partnerships in Development Aid?, by Marieke Denissen
- April 2009            A Historical Perspective on the Mirab System: A Case Study of the Jangharok Canal, Baghlan, by Vincent Thomas and Mujeeb Ahmad
- March 2009            Afghanistan's New Political Parties: A Means to Organise Democratisation? by Anna Larson
- February 2009        Decisions, Desires and Diversity: Marriage Practices in Afghanistan, by Deborah J. Smith
- February 2009        Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) Formulation Process: Influencing Factors and Challenges, by Sayed Mohammed Shah

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organisation based in Kabul. AREU's mission is to conduct high-quality research that informs and influences policy and practice. AREU also actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and facilitating reflection and debate. Fundamental to AREU's vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives.

All AREU publications are available for download at [www.areu.org.af](http://www.areu.org.af) and in hard copy from the AREU office:

Flower Street (corner of Street 2), Shahr-i-Naw, Kabul

*phone:* +93 (0)799 608 548    *website:* [www.areu.org.af](http://www.areu.org.af)    *email:* [publications@areu.org.af](mailto:publications@areu.org.af)