

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit  
Issues Paper Series

# SECURING LIFE AND LIVELIHOODS IN RURAL AFGHANISTAN

## The Role of Social Relationships



Paula Kantor and Adam Pain

December 2010





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AREU was established in 2002 by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a board of directors with representation from donors, the United Nations and other multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organisations. AREU currently receives core funds from the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Specific projects have been funded by the Foundation of the Open Society Institute Afghanistan (FOSIA), the Asia Foundation (TAF), the European Commission (EC) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

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Paula Kantor  
November 2010

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## Glossary

<i>arbaki</i>	local militia
<i>bai</i>	wealthy trader
<i>gillim</i>	type of flat, woven carpet
<i>jerib</i>	unit of land measurement, approximately one-fifth of a hectare
<i>khan</i>	landlord
<i>malik</i>	village leader
<i>palas</i>	type of flat, woven carpet with simple pattern
<i>seer</i>	unit of weight measurement, approximately seven kilos
<i>shura</i>	community council
<i>ushr</i>	one-tenth of land production given as charity
<i>zakat</i>	form of Islamic charity that involves giving a share of material wealth to the poor

## Acronyms

AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CDC	community development council
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FGD	focus group discussion
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
WFP	World Food Programme



## Executive Summary

This paper provides evidence of the importance of social relationships to Afghan rural life and livelihood outcomes. This is an understanding of rural life not generally reflected in programme design and implementation. The paper draws from recently completed qualitative research on rural livelihood change in Kandahar, Badakhshan, Sar-i-Pul and Faryab provinces. Data was collected in 11 villages across the four provinces through in-depth interviews with eight case households in each village.<sup>1</sup> The household data clearly demonstrates the various ways in which social relationships are important to livelihood security. The nature and quality of these relationships, and a household's relative position within them, influence the extent to which the relationships might enable accumulation or slow improvement, support efforts to cope with crises, or keep households in poverty. Village characteristics, including concentration of landholdings and the availability of viable non-farm options to support diversification, are associated with variations across households in livelihood outcomes, as are household characteristics such as availability of male labour, and health and disability status.

Wealthy and socially powerful elites in the villages support village interests to varying degrees, depending on the extent to which these interests overlap with their own. In poorer and more marginal rural economies, such as Badakhshan and Sar-i-Pul, this overlap is greater and there is more evidence of traditional patronage imbued with obligation to help others. In the more unequal Kandahar villages, links to politically powerful actors and a surplus economy have led to self-interested economic practices among the elites. Connections upward are used to advance elite households and not to gain advantages for the villages. Some of the village elite actively maintain existing inequalities, exploiting the less powerful to further their own accumulation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 3 for an explanation of how this approach varied in the Faryab study sites due to an unpredictable security environment. There were a total of 64 household cases, with the Faryab study supplying village-level data across three sites.

Among poorer households, hierarchical relationships with those positioned to deliver needed resources are central to livelihood security. These include dependence on landlords, with risks of arbitrary loss of sharecrop land; reliance on labour contractors or smugglers to access work outside the village in urban areas or Iran; and dependence on carpet traders for access to weaving work in Faryab. This dependence provides more predictability to highly uncertain lives, but at a cost of higher risks, lower returns and fewer choices for the future.

Charitable relationships are another way in which connections are important to livelihood security, especially for the poorest. Economic decline in many study areas, as well as modernisation processes slowly shifting interest away from collective needs, has meant offerings vary in quantity from year to year. This has made life highly precarious for those households dependent on charity. Those with more resources, who are able to access credit and reciprocate help, are enmeshed in informal mutual support networks. These generally offer credit free of interest, which aids crisis coping for most and slow improvement for a few.

Respondent households recognise the importance of social relationships to livelihood security. This means they value their inclusion in the village community and work to maintain it. The need to avoid jeopardising relationships, coupled with the existence of social inequalities within the villages, means that holding elites accountable is challenging. Efforts to change existing power relations are even more so. If these efforts risk the security that poorer and less powerful households have, even if that security is gained on unfavourable terms, they may be unwilling to participate. In this way, social relationships can create and maintain poverty. These aspects of social relationships are therefore part of the problem of poverty that policy and programmes need to address in order to achieve sustained improvements in livelihood security. Some

guidelines for good practice are presented below. It is hoped that these will improve the ability of policy and programmes to engage with the social complexity this study identifies as characterising Afghan rural life and perpetuating poverty.

### *Develop strategies to engage with village elites*

The study evidence clearly shows that the role of village elites cannot be ignored in efforts to improve rural livelihood security. Time must be built into programme development and implementation phases to assess how elites engage in the villages and what role they will play in relation to the programme. In some cases, programmes can build on their existing philanthropic role; in other cases, their potential to expropriate programme control and benefits needs to be neutralised. In cases like the Kandahar villages, where elites hold a virtual monopoly on power, a completely different strategy involving longer engagement processes and coalition-building may be needed to create alternative power centres and build support before development interventions can start.

### *Recognise that programme implementation may feed into local patronage systems*

Programme planners must recognise that their programmes enter complex social environments characterised by patronage. Programme benefits may be used within these systems for ends other than those planned for, such as strengthening social networks. Therefore, communities should not be idealised as equitable, democratic sites, closer to the people and therefore less likely to be corrupt or characterised by patronage than other institutional structures. Efforts should be made to develop monitoring systems sensitive to these potential distortions, which can document and learn from them for future planning, as well as halt abusive practices.

### *Support group formation processes and long-term transformative change*

In Afghanistan, the pressure for short-term success often means that short-term projects

define action instead of investment in long-term processes, and outputs instead of outcomes qualify as measures of success. These characteristics of the aid context mean limited attention is given to measures that have more potential to address the systemic nature of the causes of poverty identified in this paper. This needs to change if the social causes of poverty are to be eliminated and not merely mitigated. Specifically, more effort must be put into fostering processes of group formation and collective action in order to enable action against existing power-holders. Such action may seem too risky for individuals, but becomes possible for groups through strength in numbers.

Aid actors should invest in group formation processes, recognising the inherent value of such projects, and allow them to develop their own capability to identify appropriate means of countering existing inequalities. This is difficult and time consuming, and may not fit the “criticalness” driving Afghan policy processes. However, the payoff in supporting locally driven processes of social change can be considerable.

The different forms of adverse relationships identified by this study provide diverse opportunities to facilitate change. Cases where power-holders are outside the village may provide more scope for change in the medium term. Examples include working with migrant labourers to organise them, thus increasing protection and negotiating power with labour contractors or smugglers. Similar efforts could work among carpet weavers or those in sharecrop arrangements with landowners outside the village. In all cases, those taking the risks need to define the terms of engagement with those providing land, employment or other valuable resources.

Addressing inequalities is most challenging in contexts like the Kandahar villages. Even beginning to speak openly about inequalities in efforts to organise residents may bring retribution. Identifying existing residents—perhaps mullahs or others who already have or could build influence with the elites—may be one of the few ways forward.

***Identify ways to provide access to resources that challenge existing inequalities***

The evidence presented here shows that fostering agricultural growth and reducing rural poverty is about more than providing access to inputs or services. These approaches may have immediate practical benefits, but they are not guaranteed to be equitably distributed. They may also support existing inequalities instead of challenging them, leaving the poor trapped in dependent relationships in order to secure access. Efforts to improve access to resources or employment for the poor need to acknowledge that access may be mediated through relationships to others and seek ways to break these connections. Providing greater and more accessible information about the availability of state or non-governmental assistance and the criteria for qualifying is one possibility; another more macro-level option is intensifying efforts to provide legal means of labour migration to neighbouring countries.

***Understand and support existing informal support systems***

Finally, the case evidence shows the importance and prevalence of local support systems in the forms of credit and charity. It also shows the variability of support from these sources, and therefore their precariousness. Programmes seeking to promote growth, reduce poverty and improve livelihood security need to understand and engage with these existing systems. For example, microfinance institutions need to acknowledge the importance of informal credit and understand how their products will interact with existing informal credit sources and the relationships that underpin them. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled and its partners also could consider how to institutionalise forms of village charity to make them systematic, transparent and reliable, as well as orient them in the direction of development and social welfare.



# 1. Introduction

The Afghanistan state-building project is failing. Transitions to security, a political settlement, institution-building and equitable socioeconomic development have not been achieved, and overall conditions in the country are worsening. The varied reasons for this state of affairs include the limitations of the original Bonn Agreement; the compounding of a war on terror with a state-building project; the creation of a rentier state through excessive aid; divergence between the Afghan reality of personality-driven “state-building” and the institutionalised vision desired by international actors; and the tendency to approach Afghanistan’s challenges from a technical perspective that ignores politics and power.<sup>2</sup> Legally, the state may have been recreated with the characteristics of a democracy, but in effect informal power relations dominate and are diffused through complex patronage networks that benefit few.<sup>3</sup> National and international actors have continued in the post-2001 period to support a variable pattern of localised non-state regimes to deliver their agendas.

This paper examines how rural households in 11 villages across four provinces have negotiated to achieve some measure of physical and economic security within contexts of weak formal institutions and localised power.<sup>4</sup> It specifically looks at the role of social relationships within household livelihoods, given both the historic importance of these relationships in Afghanistan through its decades of conflict, and their continued

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2 Astri Suhrke, “When More is Less: Aiding State-building in Afghanistan,” Working Paper 26 (Madrid: FRIDE, 2006); Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, “Bribes or Bargains? Peace Conditionalities and ‘Post-Conflict’ Reconstruction in Afghanistan,” *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 1 (2007): 41-61; Carl Forsberg, “Politics and Power in Kandahar,” Afghanistan Report 5 (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2010); Paula Kantor, “Improving Efforts to Achieve Equitable Growth and Reduce Poverty” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

3 Forsberg, “Politics and Power.”

4 The study from which the data is drawn was funded by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) RES-167-25-0285.

importance in the face of the self-interest often characterising the operation of formal institutions in post-2001 Afghanistan. The paper analyses household case data to develop an understanding of how rural households in Afghanistan seek security. Within this subject, it focuses on how different households are integrated into different types of social relationships, looks at the variable quality and usefulness of these relationships, and considers what conditions might facilitate autonomous rather than dependent forms of security which support movement out of poverty. In doing so, the paper explores the importance of context, linking the details of household experiences to their village and provincial locations.<sup>5</sup> It provides an understanding of opportunities for, and constraints on, rural development in Afghanistan based on existing social hierarchies and relationships. It therefore illustrates the social complexities and diversity with which interventions aimed at improving rural livelihood security and reducing poverty must engage—interventions which to date have focused more on filling gaps in access to human and material resources than on addressing the root causes of poverty.

The next section draws on literature on relational views of poverty to provide a conceptual foundation for the paper. This is followed in Section 3 by a summary of the methods used in the study, and in Section 4 by a presentation of the provincial and village study contexts. Section 5 presents empirical material illustrating the diverse roles of social relationships in the livelihoods of case study households. Section 6 concludes with thoughts on the need for policy and programming to better integrate an understanding of the social complexities behind experiences of poverty, in order to improve efforts to facilitate rural development and poverty reduction in Afghanistan.

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5 See Adam Pain and Paula Kantor, *Understanding and Addressing Context in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, December 2010) for a detailed analysis of the relevance of context to understanding rural livelihoods and programmatic interventions.

## 2. Seeking Security through Relationships

This section provides a conceptual background for the paper. It presents material defining a relational understanding of poverty and livelihood insecurity. Although this perspective is complicated, this paper argues that it better reflects social realities on the ground. This section then develops the conceptual framework informing the paper's data analysis approach.

Insecurity in Afghanistan comes from multiple overlapping sources. One source is the growing physical insecurity linked to the insurgency, which shapes daily life for many Afghans. The expanding insurgency is linked in part to a weak state—unwilling or unable to deliver quality basic services or economic opportunities that benefit the poor—and to citizen perceptions and experiences of corruption.<sup>6</sup> The continuing gap between formal state structures and the people as well as peoples' growing sense of officials' use of patronage relations for their own political and material gain mean the legitimacy of the state is low. Informal institutional structures, often at the community level, are perceived as more legitimate, though they too can act in favour of the few and maintain existing social hierarchies.<sup>7</sup>

Livelihood insecurity is another constant feature of life for the majority of Afghans. These are people outside of patronage networks and the highly paid contracts and political positions they bring, buffeted by policy decisions—such as those reducing opium poppy cultivation—that are often oriented

to serve outside political interests. They perceive markets as highly risky and controlled by people in power.<sup>8</sup> Remoteness, climatic shocks, lack of investment in or equitable access to basic services, landlessness and dependence, skill deficits, gender norms and a lack of influence all stymie efforts to take advantage of growth opportunities from the aid, construction, service or agriculture sectors.<sup>9</sup> According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Many consequently depend on the precarious support of other people, including those providing humanitarian aid.”<sup>10</sup> This may foster dependence on a new range of aid actors or reliance on access to forms of support, such as credit or cash for work, which may aid present survival but do little in the face of the structural risks to be overcome.

These characteristics of life in Afghanistan illustrate the relevance of the concept of an informal security regime<sup>11</sup> to analysis of poverty and insecurity in the Afghan context. At the core of an informal security regime is the inability of the poor and less powerful to rely on institutions of the state and market to work reliably in their favour. This is due to the likelihood of self-interest outweighing public interest, in that these institutions function to maintain the position of elites within or controlling them. This means

6 Manija Gardizi, Karen Hussmann and Yama Torabi, “Corrupting the State or State-Crafted Corruption? Exploring the Nexus between Corruption and Subnational Governance” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010); Sarah Ladbury, “Testing Hypotheses on Radicalization in Afghanistan: Why Do Men Join the Taliban and Hizb-I Islami? How Much Do Local Communities Support Them?” (London: Department for International Development, 2009).

7 United Nations Development Programme, *Security with a Human Face: Afghanistan National Human Development Report* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2004); Gardizi et al., “Corrupting the State”; Alex Thier, “Introduction: Building Bridges,” in *The Future of Afghanistan*, ed. Alex Thier, 1-11 (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009).

8 UNDP, *Security with a Human Face*; Sarah Lister and Adam Pain, *Trading in Power: The Politics of “Free” Markets in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2004); Lorene Flaming and Alan Roe, *Opportunities for Pro-Poor Agricultural Growth* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2009); Tom Shaw, “Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Sar-i-Pul” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

9 UNDP, *Security with a Human Face*; Flaming and Roe, *Pro-Poor Agricultural Growth*; Kantor, “Improving Efforts.”

10 UNDP, *Security with a Human Face*, 55.

11 Geof Wood, “Informal Security Regimes: The Strength of Relationships,” in *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America*, ed. Ian Gough and Geof Wood, 49-87 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); G. Wood and I. Gough, “A Comparative Welfare Regime Approach to Global Social Policy,” *World Development* 34, no. 10 (2006): 1696-1712.



that for most people, relationships within the institutions of the community and family are better options for gaining a measure of social, economic and physical security. Key issues to explore conceptually and empirically include the quality of these relationships, how well they deliver security and for whom, and what the poor might need to benefit from these processes.

For the poor or less powerful, achieving security through social relationships can come at the cost of dependence.

Seeking security is about finding ways to increase predictability.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore important to consider how different groups achieve this goal, as well as the sources of unpredictability they face. While some analysts focus primarily on random sources of risk such as ill health or floods,<sup>13</sup> this paper takes a broader view of risk to include chronic or structural forms.<sup>14</sup> These chronic risks, such as geographical constraints or social identity, are thought to drive the persistence of poverty and are embedded in the ways institutions and social relations function. Due to these factors, efforts to fill gaps in human or material resources are insufficient to reverse their effects; institutional reform is required to increase equity, transparency and accountability.

12 Geof Wood, “Staying Secure and Staying Poor: The Faustian Bargain,” *World Development* 31, no. 3 (2003): 455-71; Wood, “Informal Security Regimes”; Geof Wood, “Using Security to Indicate Wellbeing,” in *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: From Theory to Research*, ed. Ian Gough and J.A. McGregor, 109-32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

13 R. Holzmann and S. Jorgensen, “Social Protection as Social Risk Management: Conceptual Underpinnings for the Social Protection Sector Strategy Paper,” Social Protection Discussion Paper Series 9904 (Washington DC: World Bank, 1999); Stefen Dercon, “Vulnerability: A Micro Perspective,” Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series, Working Paper no. 149 (Oxford: Queen Elizabeth House, 2006).

14 Wood, “Staying Secure”; D. Mosse, “Power and the Durability of Poverty: A Critical Exploration of the Links between Culture, Marginality and Chronic Poverty,” Working Paper No. 107 (Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2007); Frances Cleaver, “The Inequality of Social Capital and the Reproduction of Chronic Poverty,” *World Development* 33, no. 6 (2005): 893-906.

Because trying to change existing systems to achieve a better position is risky, poorer and less powerful groups are thought to negotiate within the existing social system to secure their present lives and achieve predictability.<sup>15</sup> One strategy within this approach involves establishing and maintaining relationships with those who can deliver immediate benefits—from employment to housing to credit.<sup>16</sup> Given uncertain and unequal access to the state and market in many contexts, these often take the form of informal relationships within the community and family. This valuation of informal social relationships fits the Afghan context, where mutual support mechanisms and traditional patronage structures have been those more likely to provide some measure of security throughout decades of conflict and into the post-2001 period.<sup>17</sup> These relationships have been an important basis for resilience, and poor Afghans in particular have been skilful and strategic in cultivating and maintaining community and household relations to achieve some measure of security.

Social relationships are therefore valuable both in themselves—as a signal of belonging to a social group and hence qualifying for support—and as a means to access other resources of interest.<sup>18</sup> Past research by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) has illustrated the value placed on

15 Wood, “Staying Secure”; Wood, “Informal Security Regimes”; Wood “Using Security”; Mosse, “Power and the Durability of Poverty”; Sam Hickey and Andries du Toit, “Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion and Chronic Poverty,” Working Paper No. 81 (Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2007).

16 Mosse, “Power and the Durability of Poverty”; Cleaver, “Inequality of Social Capital”; Hickey and du Toit, “Adverse Incorporation”; Wood, “Informal Security Regimes.”

17 UNDP, *Security with a Human Face*; Government of Afghanistan, “Social Protection Strategy” (Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 2008).

18 Anthony Bebbington, “Capitals and Capabilities: A Framework for Analyzing Peasant Viability, Rural Livelihoods and Poverty,” *World Development* 27, no. 12 (1999): 2021-44; James Copstake, “Poverty and Exclusion, Resources and Relationships: Theorising the Links between Economic and Social Development,” in *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: From Theory to Research*, ed. Ian Gough and J.A. McGregor, 199-215 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); S. White and M. Ellison, “Wellbeing, Livelihoods and Resources in Social Practice,” in *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: From Theory to Research*, ed. Ian Gough and J.A. McGregor, 157-75 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

relationships through the actions households take to strengthen or maintain them. This includes returnee households conforming to social practices, such as stricter limits on female mobility, to maintain family relationships,<sup>19</sup> and households borrowing microcredit to pass on to others in order to cement reciprocal or hierarchical relations.<sup>20</sup>

For the poor or less powerful, achieving security through social relationships can come at the cost of dependence within patronage relationships. These relationships of inequality might bring a negative mix of political exclusion (i.e. little influence or voice) and economic and social inclusion under adverse terms.<sup>21</sup> They can therefore limit the poor's scope of action even as they strengthen their position and sense of belonging within the current system.<sup>22</sup> For example, a household might decide not to send its daughters to school if this is the community norm. Such compromises perpetuate the system's inequities and illustrate the relevance of a relational view of poverty, in that those with resources and autonomy are often in a position to define norms in their favour and gain from the dependence of the poor.<sup>23</sup> Under such circumstances, neither the elites nor the poor are motivated to change the system.

For the poor, the risks involved in challenging the existing social system through collective action—the primary means of seeking greater autonomous security—are considerable.<sup>24</sup> There are significant

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19 Mamiko Saito, *Searching for My Homeland: Dilemmas between Borders—Experiences of Young Afghans Returning “Home” from Pakistan and Iran* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2009).

20 Paula Kantor, *From Access to Impact: The Role of Microcredit in Rural Livelihoods* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2009).

21 Wood, “Staying Secure”; Wood, “Informal Security Regimes”; Wood, “Using Security”; Mosse, “Power and the Durability of Poverty.”

22 Cleaver, “Inequality of Social Capital”; Barbara Harriss-White, “Destitution and the Poverty of Its Politics—With Special Reference to South Asia,” *World Development* 33, no. 6 (2005): 881-91; Wood, “Staying Secure.”

23 Mosse, “Power and the Durability of Poverty.”

24 Cleaver, “Inequality of Social Capital”; Wood, “Informal Security Regimes”; Hickey and du Toit, “Adverse Incorporation.”

barriers to achieving the necessary solidarity, which involves overcoming a sense of competition over the limited resources available, fear of losing security already in place, and fear of retribution from those in power.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, dependence is an important means of achieving security in contexts where the institutional environment is unpredictable and lacks transparency. However, in the Afghan case, dependent relationships with the more powerful are often complemented by strong mutual support mechanisms among peers. Those without the latter sources of support are the most vulnerable to extreme dependence and exploitation. As a result, there will be different levels of dependence or risk of exploitation within patronage relationships, depending on the parties involved and the diversity and relative levels of their social and material resources. Variation in people's abilities to negotiate how they are included within relationships will lead to diverse placements along a continuum of dependent security, leading to different sets of livelihood outcomes. Such diversity may allow for different opportunities for either leaving these relationships or negotiating within them.

This diversity suggests that a framework that describes relationships of different qualities, entered into from different resource positions and allowing more or less independent action would be useful to poverty analysis. It is important to note that households are embedded in a range of different relationships and cannot simply be classified within one static position. However, understanding the existence and interplay of different forms and qualities of relationships within different village and household contexts can inform practice and improve efforts to address the social causes of poverty.

The framework of this paper incorporates four categories. The first two are categories of inclusion, characterised by more autonomy, and encompassing individuals or households more highly resourced than others. The individuals and households described by these categories tend to be the local elite, with existing economic or social power. The power and resources they have provide them with better and

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25 Andries du Toit, “‘Social Exclusion’ Discourse and Chronic Poverty: A South African Case Study,” *Development and Change* 35, no. 5 (2004): 987-1010; Wood, “Staying Secure”; Wood, “Using Security.”



more diverse livelihood choices, protection from adverse consequences related to the removal of opportunities and, for some, the means to influence how systems operate to serve their own interests. These two categories are labelled “privileged” and “secondary inclusion.”<sup>26</sup> The first includes those with central positions in an institution, able to set norms and rules and influence the social lives of others. Secondary inclusion implies a less central role, but the secondarily included are able to gain advantages and accumulate resources through connections to both more privileged community members and power-holders outside of the village.

A third category for analysis captures the concept of dependent security and the hierarchy embedded within its associated relationships. These are relationships between poorer households and better-off, more powerful actors in the village or outside of it. They provide the poor with access to land, employment, food and credit. The analysis will examine the presence of hierarchical relationships across study locations and variations in their adverse characteristics. It will assess the circumstances determining when these relationships are imbued with obligation and less exploitative, and when they are highly adverse to the extent that individuals or households are included on terms negative to their well-being.

The literature developing a relational conceptualisation of risk and poverty tends to focus more on hierarchical relationships than on

those characterised by reciprocity. Reciprocal relationships are recognised as a means to deliver social protection for the poor, but often only in the short term or at a level sufficient to support survival rather than advancement.<sup>27</sup> This is because they tend to involve networks among peers, which for the poor are limited by scarce resources and may be difficult to sustain. However, reciprocity has had an important role in securing Afghan livelihoods during the decades of conflict.<sup>28</sup> AREU studies of credit relationships in rural Afghanistan since 2002 illustrate the considerable resources available through informal reciprocal networks, supporting marriage, consumption smoothing, crisis responses and productive investments.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the fourth and final category examines the role of reciprocal relationships such as credit networks to determine the conditions that can weaken the hold of dependent relationships and support individual progress.

The analysis presented in Section 5 identifies the diversity of relationships present across different village contexts and household cases to understand their outcomes for different respondents. It applies the categories of privileged and secondary inclusion within an analysis of elite inclusion, and examines the diverse quality of hierarchical relationships and the importance of reciprocity. Through outlining the types and qualities of social relationships in rural Afghanistan, it demonstrates the importance of understanding these relationships when working to improve livelihood security.

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26 Naila Kabeer, “Social Exclusion, Poverty and Discrimination: Towards an Analytical Framework,” *IDS Bulletin* 31, no. 4 (2000): 83-97.

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27 Wood, “Using Security”; Wood, “Staying Secure”; Cleaver, “Inequality of Social Capital.”

28 Government of Afghanistan, “Social Protection Strategy”; UNDP, *Security with a Human Face*.

29 Floortje Klijn and Adam Pain, *Finding the Money: Informal Credit Practices in Rural Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2007); Kantor, *From Access to Impact*.

## 3. Methodology

This study builds on a previous study by AREU documenting the state of rural livelihoods in Afghanistan in 2002-03.<sup>30</sup> Researchers revisited a selection of field sites from the initial study to understand how and why changes occurred in the lives and livelihoods of case study households over the period of 2002-09. The research was carried out by AREU and its partners—the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and Mercy Corps. This paper examines the role of social relationships in rural livelihoods, a topic not addressed in detail in the initial study. Therefore it focuses on differences across study villages and households, and not change over time.

### 3.1 Research approach

The initial 2002-03 study was conducted in 21 villages across seven provinces.<sup>31</sup> It collected quantitative data from 20 households per village, distributed across wealth groups as defined by village elders.<sup>32</sup> It was carried out through partnerships with several nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), with AREU staff monitoring data collection, analysing the data and writing final reports. Its primary aim was to develop an understanding of the rural livelihoods of both wealthy and poor Afghans to inform reconstruction and development efforts.

The current study sought to gain a detailed picture of the factors influencing rural livelihood change and how these varied across household, village and provincial contexts. Since it focused on investigating patterns of similarity and difference and why they exist, it took a qualitative research approach to collect in-depth information from a small number of

carefully selected household cases. Fewer provinces and villages were covered in the second research phase, since a qualitative approach requires more time per village, as well as greater data collection skills. AREU staff played a more central role in data collection during this phase. Security concerns also limited the number of provinces covered, as some had become less accessible. The study was carried out in Kandahar, Badakhshan, Sar-i-Pul and Faryab (see Table 1 for the data collection periods). All village names have been changed to ensure the anonymity of respondents.

There was some variation in how the study proceeded in each location. For Kandahar and Badakhshan, NGO partners Mercy Corps and AKF respectively carried out the field work, with training and monitoring from AREU. In Kandahar, although Mercy Corps had long-standing connections to the province, it could only safely carry out research in two of the three villages from the earlier study. An AREU field team carried out the research in the three Sar-i-Pul villages, as well as in Faryab. However, work in Faryab was complicated by recent insurgent incursions into the study district, which did not allow detailed household interviews to be conducted. The changes in methods that this required are detailed below, following a summary of the approach used in the other locations.

*Table 1: Dates of Data Collection*

Province	Data Collection Period
Sar-i-Pul	June 2008–June 2009
Kandahar	August 2008–March 2009
Badakhshan	August 2008–July 2009
Faryab	November 2009

### 3.2 Interview procedures

The field teams applied retrospective in-depth interview techniques to explore household lives and livelihoods during the period from 2002 to the present, and to understand how and why different decisions were taken and with what effects. The teams were composed of two female and two male

30 Jo Grace and Adam Pain, *Rethinking Rural Livelihoods in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2004).

31 Herat, Sar-i-Pul, Faryab, Kandahar, Badakhshan, Laghman and Ghazni.

32 These wealth groups were locally defined and categorised households into three general groups: wealthy, middle and poor. Since they were locally defined, they are relative to their location and do not enable wealth group comparisons across sites.

Afghan interviewers, guaranteeing that they could speak to both male and female respondents. In total, four interviews were held per household (though not in Faryab)—two with men and two with women. The information gathered, along with the data from initial informal interviews, provided a wealth of detail. This micro-level detail was augmented by data collected on the study villages and districts, so that household experiences could be understood within their contexts. The different stages of data collection are provided below, followed by a summary of how the work in Faryab proceeded.

**Household profile:** Using the 2002-03 household data, a household profile was prepared for each of the originally interviewed households. The profile summarised basic data on household composition and economy in 2002-03.

**Introductory interviews:** The interview team introduced themselves to the village, holding focus group discussions (FGDs) with both men (ordinarily elders) and women in order to collect general information about the village itself, and changes in livelihood activities and security since 2002-03. These were followed by a series of introductory discussions with all of the original sample households still present in the village.<sup>33</sup> These interviews were informed by the household profiles and explored changes that had happened in the household (composition, economy, etc.) and the direction of household fortunes (improving, maintaining or declining).

**Household selection:** Based on the introductory interview evidence, a sub-sample of eight households, proportional to the number of households in each wealth group in the original 20-household sample, was selected for further interviews.<sup>34</sup> Selection was guided by a desire for diversity according to wealth group, livelihood trajectory (when such variation existed), household size and composition, landholdings, and livelihood portfolios.

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33 An average of three to four families out of those originally interviewed in each study village were no longer living in the village or its vicinity.

34 Across study villages, one to two respondent households were in the highest wealth group, meaning in total 19 percent of all respondent households were in this category.

**Household interview guides:** All teams used a standard household interview guide structured around eight common themes<sup>35</sup> to ensure each one collected data on the same topics. However, information from the introductory interviews was used to focus these discussions on particular household experiences, making them relevant and engaging for respondents.

**Household interviews:** Household interviews were carried out by the male and female teams, usually with the head of the household and the oldest woman (in the case of joint households), with each interviewed twice. Occasionally, sons, daughters or daughters-in-law were interviewed when the head of the household was away, or when the intended respondent was sick. In a minority of cases, one longer interview was undertaken due to a respondent being unavailable for a second. Often other household members were present, particularly for the female interviews, as finding a private spot was not possible in most respondent homes. Lead researchers regularly provided feedback to the interviewers based on transcripts, and held analytical discussions with the field teams to explore themes and develop second interview guides building on what was learned in the first engagement.

**Debriefing:** Debriefing sessions were held with the field teams at the end of data collection for each study site. The project team contributed to joint analysis on emerging themes based on the collected information and observations. Some of the sessions involved clarification of issues for particular households, while others involved systematic household comparisons in relation to key themes. Discussions were held regarding the meanings of particular local terms and the ways in which respondents articulated ideas.

In Faryab, the rise in insurgent activity in the study district of Dawlatabad meant that regular access to the three study villages was no longer safe for

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35 These included household composition and structure, household history, home and services, land and agricultural production, income-generating work, credit and saving, links with the state/government and informal systems, and wider context.

village residents<sup>36</sup> or the field team; the team could not reside in the study district for the same reason; nor could it travel daily on the road from either of the two urban centres in the province due to the security risk of establishing travel routines.<sup>37</sup> Therefore the Faryab case study focuses primarily on the village as the unit of analysis instead of the household, and examines how two major changes in the study area—drought and rising insecurity—have affected lives and livelihoods across the three sites. The research provided broad knowledge on the effects of these changes on different ethnic groups within the villages, intra-village relationships and the village economy. It obtained the richest data from FGDs with residents in the study villages, most of whom were respondents in the previous study.

This data was supplemented with household and key informant interviews.<sup>38</sup>

Issues of translation and interpretation were continually considered in analysing all of the transcripts, which were produced from verbatim notes. Though the combined skills of the research project staff were strong, it was inevitable that some information was lost in the note-taking, translation and transcribing stages, and in the interpretation of nuance, emphasis and tone. The project staff attempted to minimise such information loss by having a note-taker transcribe the interview jointly with the interviewer, and by reviewing and approving notes and transcripts as soon as reasonably possible after the conclusion of the interview.

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36 Village elders advised the field team to not enter Efroz at all and to make visits to Chakar and Hisaar few and sporadic. Local government officials gave the same advice.

37 For more detail on the methods used in the Faryab study, please refer to Batul Nezami with Paula Kantor, “Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Faryab” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

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38 The field team conducted eight FGDs, 13 short household interviews and 13 key informant interviews.

## 4. Provincial and Village Contexts

This section provides an overview of the social, political and demographic contexts of the study provinces and villages. This background is relevant to understanding the differing experiences of the case households, as discussed in Section 5.

### 4.1 Kandahar

The southern province of Kandahar is Pashtun dominated.<sup>39</sup> It is agriculturally rich, due to its irrigation resources, and supports horticultural production including raisins and pomegranates. Kandahar city is the second largest urban area in the country, with a vibrant urban economy linked to licit and illicit cross-border trade, a booming construction sector and a large international presence with considerable aid and military expenditures.<sup>40</sup>

Kandahar has been central to Afghanistan's political development as the origin of most of the country's ruling elites.<sup>41</sup> It was also the centre of Taliban rule. Tribal dynamics and power struggles have been and continue to be important to the province's political history. The ability of strongmen, often linked to the *jihad*, to re-establish their positions in the province after the Taliban's fall is relevant to this paper. They regained power in part through seizing or annexing land and becoming landlords. In this process, however, they reportedly took on only some of the related obligations of the traditional landlord role.<sup>42</sup> This shift in the role played by landlords strengthened social hierarchies within

villages, as well as outside patronage networks involving village power-holders. The latter change was supported by new networks including political elites in the centre and province, as well as international actors keen to maintain positions in Kandahar from which they could support their military and development interventions.<sup>43</sup> Ahmad Wali Karzai's leadership of the provincial council, his connections to the president and his amassing of a "political and commercial empire" in the province have made him a key resource.<sup>44</sup>

The study district of Dand includes the home village of the Karzai family. Therefore connections to the Karzai family are a valuable social resource for some residents from both study villages. Both villages are similar in terms of location, livelihood opportunities and experiences of the decades of conflict, as Table A1 in the appendix illustrates. Another characteristic they share, but which is evident in different ways, is the influence of a strong social hierarchy displaying considerable self-interest. In Lalakai, one of the three landowners wields considerable power. He is the head of the village and its community development council (CDC) and an elected member of the provincial council, providing a connection to Ahmad Wali Karzai. The social hierarchy of Julan is more diffuse and spread among six *maliks* (village leaders), though the head *malik* is most powerful. He too is linked to provincial and central political power-holders and receives patronage from these sources for his own advantage. The connections of the village elite to Ahmad Wali Karzai and national political figures, along with proximity to Kandahar city, provide a relative degree of physical security. Proximity to Kandahar city has also offered economic opportunities, benefiting residents differently depending on their connections, skills and capital.

39 For more detail on the Kandahar context and findings, see Adam Pain, "Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Kandahar" (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

40 Central Statistics Organization, "Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2010/11" (Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 2010).

41 Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, "The Inverted Circle: Kabul and the Strongmen's Competition for Control over Kandahar, 2001-2006," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 2 (2007): 167-84.

42 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle."

43 Forsberg, "Politics and Power."

44 Forsberg, "Politics and Power," 17.



## 4.2 Badakhshan

Badakhshan Province is located in the northeast of Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> It is mountainous, sparsely populated, remote and relatively underdeveloped, with a history of chronic food insecurity. A single road—which is often impassable due to rain, snow, avalanches or mudslides—provides access links to the rest of the country.<sup>46</sup> It is a multi-ethnic province made up mainly of Tajiks and Uzbeks along with a number of minority groups including the Ismailis. This diversity has produced a fragmented political landscape, which is also due in part to its terrain and the related difficulties of extending and maintaining control. President Hamid Karzai seeks to maintain control in the province and counter a local rival through his local representative, Zalmay Khan.<sup>47</sup> However, internal control remains a challenge, and local power-holders maintain a strong hand in their areas.<sup>48</sup> Opium cultivation had risen in prominence by 2000 and lasted through 2007; after 2007, cultivation bans, threats of eradication and shifting terms of trade between opium and wheat led to a decline in cultivation and prosperity.<sup>49</sup> One interesting characteristic of the province is a growth in the educated classes since the 1960s. This has led to significant investment in education in the province.<sup>50</sup>

45 For more detail on the Badakhshan context and findings, see Adam Pain, “Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

46 A. Giustozzi and D. Orsini, “Centre-Periphery Relations in Afghanistan: Badakhshan between Patrimonialism and Institution Building,” *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (2009): 1-16; Pain, “Evidence from Badakhshan.”

47 See Giustozzi and Orsini, “Centre-Periphery Relations.” Zalmay Khan is the son of a local elder who had a close relationship with Karzai prior to returning to Badakhshan. He won a seat in Afghanistan’s parliament in late 2005.

48 Giustozzi and Orsini, “Centre-Periphery Relations.”

49 Pain, “Evidence from Badakhshan.”

50 Giustozzi and Orsini, “Centre-Periphery Relations.” The *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8* reports Badakhshan’s male literacy rate as 42 percent and female literacy rate as 15 percent; this covers both urban and rural areas.

The three Badakhshan study villages, located in Jurm and Baharak districts, vary in location, accessibility, demographics and educational investments, exposure to conflict, local leadership, and the presence and usefulness of external connections (see Table A2 in the appendix). Shur Qul’s early investment in education facilitated its ability to build external networks that are strategically useful. It has a grain deficit economy, which likely influenced its enlightened push toward education as a way to expand livelihood options. The same economic circumstances may also have led the elite to associate village survival with their own interests, given the precariousness of life and livelihood outcomes for all.

Toghloq has a relatively secure agrarian economy that does not require outside support; this has made it more insular than Shur Qul. Its geographic position has enabled the village to successfully defend itself against external forces. After the departure of the Soviets, self-interest among village power-holders became more evident, reflecting perhaps the greater land inequalities of this village compared with the other two. Consequently, the leadership did not display the same degree of social concern for the village as was found in Shur Qul. Internal conflict pushed out the elected leader of what many respondents considered an effective CDC, perhaps because its effectiveness was a threat to others. As a result of the ban on opium cultivation, a number of men have joined the army or police. Some respondents viewed this as a step toward breaking the old dependence on landlords.

Khilar is small and economically and socially marginal, due to its remote location, poor landholdings and Ismaili identity. It gained physical security by achieving protectorate status under Commander Qutbuddin and creating local strategic alliances. Its overall lack of economic, social and political resources has limited the provision of basic services to its residents, who face the harshest conditions among the three villages. Khilar is the most dependent on resources from outside of the village.

### 4.3 Sar-i-Pul

Sar-i-Pul Province is among the poorest in Afghanistan, ranked 31st out of 34 provinces in a recent well-being index.<sup>51</sup> It has primarily mountainous and semi-mountainous terrain.<sup>52</sup> Rain-fed agriculture and livestock rearing, often combined with non-farm labour, are primary livelihood activities. Agriculture activities are constrained by Sar-i-Pul's limited availability of irrigation water, with supply constraints compounded by distributional inequities between villages.<sup>53</sup> This makes the province highly vulnerable to drought-induced crop failure and household food shortages, leading to longstanding patterns of seasonal labour migration to more viable areas inside and outside of the country. Sar-i-Pul has faced drought conditions from 2006-08, compounded by a severe winter in 2007-08.

Sar-i-Pul is politically as well as economically marginal—a fact that is illustrated by its relative isolation from central government and international aid. It appears to be a “forgotten province,”<sup>54</sup> being physically secure in 2008 but lacking an active and effective government and an aid community to help deliver reconstruction and poverty reduction programmes. It is a majority Uzbek province, with pockets of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Arabs and Hazaras. Conflict caused widespread internal and international displacement in the early to mid-1980s, and then again toward the end of the Taliban regime.

Sayyad District, the location of the three study villages, is among the poorest in Sar-i-Pul.

51 Central Statistics Organization and United Nations Population Fund, “A Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile” (Kabul: Central Statistics Organization and United Nations Population Fund, 2007).

52 For more detail on the Sar-i-Pul findings, see Shaw, “Evidence from Sar-i-Pul.”

53 Adam Pain, “Understanding Village Institutions: Case Studies on Water Management from Faryab and Sar-i-Pul” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2004).

54 Katarina Larsson, “A Provincial Survey of Balkh, Jowzjan, Samangan and Saripul” (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2008).

Insecurity in the study district has been a growing problem. Given the instability in neighbouring Jawzjan and the increase in anti-government group infiltration in other areas of the north, it seems likely that Sayyad residents will have to negotiate an increasingly complex environment of conflict between power-holders in order to secure their livelihoods and personal safety.

Table A3 in the appendix compares characteristics of the three study villages. Kushlak is the smallest and poorest of the three. Its poverty status and limited access to water have made it the worst hit by the drought, and have weakened internal support mechanisms more quickly relative to the other villages. Its history of shorter phases of internal displacement (rather than international migration) meant it did not benefit from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) aid that facilitated reconstruction in the other villages. This history has also kept the village more inward looking.

Pishin's more favourable landholdings and irrigation water access meant it experienced a later onset of drought-related decline relative to Kushlak. Along with this advantage, its status as district centre, its more astute political leadership and the cohesion built through a long period of joint migration led to more robust local support mechanisms compared to both of the other villages.

Sarband is recently established, multi-ethnic (Arab and Pashtun) and lacks a shared migration experience. Its links are to Sar-i-Pul town, where many of its landowners live and where residents obtain credit. The ties to Sar-i-Pul town are socially and geographically distant, meaning credit comes with collateral requirements and interest. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) has been dysfunctional and corrupt, and the *shura* in the Pashtun area was disbanded when the leader reportedly absconded with the funds. An official of the *shura* in the Arab area also admitted using his position for personal gain.

## 4.4 Faryab

Faryab Province is located in the northwest of Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup> The residents are multi-ethnic, with Uzbeks in the majority, and minorities of Tajiks, Pashtuns, Turkmen, Arabs and Hazaras. Agriculture is a significant livelihood activity, as is livestock rearing and the production and trade of carpets, *gillims* and leather products.<sup>56</sup> Like Sar-i-Pul, Faryab Province was affected by severe drought, but reportedly for a longer period; its last year of drought coincided with the hard winter in 2007-08 and the increase of insurgent incursions in some districts of Faryab, including the study district of Dawlatabad.

Faryab has had a complex political history during the past three decades of conflict. Infighting between resistance parties after 1978 produced local strongmen with influence in large portions of the province. One of these was Rasul Pahlawan. He gained early influence in the study district and used it to chase out Auraz Zabet, a commander with links to Chakar. Rasul Pahlawan maintained his position until 1996, when he was assassinated. In time, his assassination brought instability, which enabled the Taliban to enter Faryab for the first time in 1998. Rasul Pahlawan's rule adversely affected Pashtun communities, including Efroz, while that of the Taliban led to persecution of non-Pashtun communities, such as residents of Turkmen Chakar and Uzbek Hisaar. In both cases, outmigration was a common response. After 2004, Auraz Zabet returned to Faryab and gained legitimacy and patronage through employment with

the World Food Programme (WFP) in Dawlatabad, as well as through a request from the government to form an *arbaki* (local militia) to provide security for the 2009 presidential election.

Table A4 in the appendix compares the characteristics of the three Faryab study villages. As noted, each has a distinct ethnic composition, affecting how well it has survived the different phases of conflict based on village allegiance or opposition to related "winners." Likewise, the two periods of drought had somewhat different effects, largely linked to the balance of irrigated versus rain-fed landholdings in the villages, and the ability of residents to diversify through labour migration or turning to other income sources such as carpet-weaving.

The experiences of the Faryab villages illustrate how social identity and links to those in power are as important to village outcomes as access to productive resources. The same can be said of the effects of the upsurge in violence in the area since 2007. Residents of all three villages were affected by the need to pay *ushr* (an annual religious tax) to maintain their security and by periods of limited access to agriculture and pasture lands, both of which negatively affected livelihood outcomes. However, Chakar's link to Auraz Zabet successfully protected it from insurgent visits to the village until his assassination in May 2010; Hisaar tried negotiation and self-protection of assets, with mixed success; and Efroz was affected by ethnic prejudices linking the insurgents to the village's Pashtun population.

55 For more detail on the Faryab findings, see Nezami and Kantor, "Evidence from Faryab."

56 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Governance Profile: Faryab Province" (Kabul: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2010).



## 5. The Role of Social Relationships in Rural Life

This section presents household case data to illustrate the diverse types and qualities of social relationships within the different village contexts, and to show how they influence livelihood outcomes.<sup>57</sup> The evidence clearly illustrates the presence and important role of a range of social relationships in Afghan rural livelihoods. Village context most clearly influences elite roles. For the Kandahar village elite, relationships upward to powerful actors provide more opportunities to diversify and accumulate; among these villages there are also cases in which a near monopoly of power has enabled elites to benefit from the dependence of others. Other villages offer elites fewer opportunities to benefit from outside patronage networks due to their poor resource positions. However, for some village elites, control of the CDC has become a new means of profit and exerting power. Among poorer respondent households, small movements out of poverty have been possible for a select few with strong informal credit connections and proximity to urban opportunities. Those unable to maintain creditworthiness are dependent on charity for their meagre livelihoods. The case households provide many examples of the need either to enter into adverse relationships on negative terms in order to access employment or land, or where possible seek traditional patrons who provide help with a greater sense of obligation. In all of these cases, maintaining one's reputation to ensure full community membership and its related benefits is vital, and this reality has closed off opportunities to complain about abuses of power by the better resourced.

### 5.1 Elite inclusion

The household cases provide evidence of elites in positions of privileged and secondary inclusion, with the former able to influence village life through their economic and social positions, and

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57 Detailed descriptions of all household cases are not provided here. Relevant aspects of selected cases are highlighted to illustrate patterns in the use of social resources, drawing from the conceptual framework outlined in Section 2.

through their relationships with others socially above and beneath them. The secondarily included have been able to gain economic security through their connections upward, some in a relatively short period, providing a firmer base from which to continue to accumulate resources. The willingness and ability of elites to translate their positions into more resources for themselves or for the village varied across study villages, reflecting at least in part each village's internal social hierarchy, which in turn was affected by the social, political and material resource positions of the villages.<sup>58</sup>

The Kandahar villages of Lalakai and Julan provide the most examples of privileged and secondary inclusion, and the strongest evidence of the use of these positions for the elites' own accumulation. The area's surplus agricultural economy coupled with highly unequal land distribution in the villages has created the conditions for landowners to hold considerable wealth and power and to seek to maintain this position. Social relationships with politically powerful people in Kandahar and Kabul have aided their efforts to maintain their positions. For example, Lalakai's largest landowner has used his privileged position and the dependence of others to accumulate in his own interests.<sup>59</sup> This is achieved particularly through recruiting in-migrants—who are willing to accept his authority, due to his control over their livelihoods—to the village as his sharecroppers. He can take away these contracts at will, with devastating effects.<sup>60</sup> The introduction of the NSP CDC to the village provided him with a new route to accumulate resources and power, as did the provincial council. As the self-

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58 Pain and Kantor, *Understanding and Addressing*; Thomas Barfield, *A Social and Cultural History of Afghanistan* (Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 2010).

59 This landlord was not the head of a respondent household, but the field team heard about his relationships through reports of others' interactions with him. A key informant interview was conducted with him as well.

60 See the case of household Lalakai-00 in Pain, "Evidence from Kandahar."

appointed head of the CDC, he has been able to direct development resources to meet his own needs, and his election to the provincial council enabled him to cement existing relationships with politically powerful actors. There is no evidence of efforts on the part of the landowner or the CDC to improve service provision to the village or to act as role models by improving the poor education investments characterising the village. Similarly, the head of household Julan-40—the lead *malik*, a major landowner and head of Julan’s CDC—has shown little evidence of using his position to improve village outcomes or even to assist his relatives. Instead, these resources are used to his own advantage. Like the landlord from Lalakai, his relationships with villagers, including a number of relatives, can be defined as exploitative. The obligatory aspect of patron-client relations is weak to non-existent. In fact, he displays ruthlessness in accumulation that counters assumptions about the role of mutual support networks in rural Afghanistan, and particularly those among kin.<sup>61</sup> The actions of these two elite members exemplify how the poverty and powerlessness of some is used to support the accumulation of others; they control local fiefdoms, ensuring that benefits come to them at the expense of others.

The secondarily included from the Kandahar villages (households Lalakai-05, Lalakai-10, Julan-42 and Julan-48) are less evidently exploitative than the two examples above. They are characterised by their use of connections upward from a position of relative resource strength to further accumulation, and not by preying on those less powerful to support their advancement. Three of these households have used Karzai connections to their advantage; household Lalakai-10 had considerable initial wealth in addition to these connections, while Lalakai-05 has relied on a longstanding relationship with the main landlord in the village to build a successful construction contracting business, which is further supported by a connection to Lalakai-10.

Badakhshan’s remote mountain economy, chronic food insecurity and severe decline after the

61 For details of his interactions with households Julan-56, Julan-40 and Julan-58, see Pain, “Evidence from Kandahar.”

opium cultivation ban mean the rural economy is much less advantageous in Badakhshan than in Kandahar. The general precariousness of life in remote mountain regions is held to promote less social division and inequality compared with richer irrigated plain economies like Kandahar’s.<sup>62</sup> Elite orientation to village survival is expected to be higher, largely because it serves their own interests as well as the collective interests of the villages. Evidence of this can be seen in comparisons of the Badakhshan and Kandahar villages, but the ability of elites to deliver on this orientation to village interests differs across Badakhshan study villages due to differences in history, demography, land inequalities, geography and the relative success of the local agricultural economy. Hence, elites in grain deficit Shur Qul experienced early exposure to the potential benefits of education, invested in linking outward for physical security and access to employment, and worked to ensure the resulting benefits were distributed throughout the village. While gaining personally from connections outside of the village, such as to Zalmay Khan, elite households like Shur Qul-38 have also been active in identifying ways to diversify the village’s economy and networks for the benefit of all. This has included negotiating with an NGO to build a girls’ school and leading by example to reduce the burden of bride price expenditures. This may have been due to the understanding, strengthened by the opium cultivation ban and recent dry years, that relatively wealthy households can easily lose their privileged positions.

Toghloq, with its better connections to the district centre, greater share of irrigated land and higher land inequalities, has a stronger agricultural economy. This has positioned village elites closer to the Kandahar elites, with self-interest and coercive power guiding their actions. However, unlike in Kandahar, the elites are not linked outward to power-holders. Instead, they seem to look inward, defending themselves and the village from the interventions of outsiders, but not motivated to deliver resources to improve village welfare. This has translated into a dysfunctional NSP CDC, which

62 Barfield, *Social and Cultural History*; Pain and Kantor, *Understanding and Addressing*.

is reportedly composed of self-selected rather than elected members after the removal of an effective elected leader from his position.

Khilar is among the most deficient in social and material resources, and has little diversity in landownership across the case households. The role of elites has focused largely on achieving protection for the village, which was done through a valley commander, Qutbuddin. This goal has taken precedence over others, and the village's small size and limited resources mean social hierarchies are smaller, and those who are relatively wealthy are not in a good position to bargain for additional resources for themselves or the village. Qutbuddin and the head of household Khilar-57, his local intermediary, are privileged and secondarily included respectively. The head of Khilar-57 is a former commander who played a significant role in bringing security to the village, and who is now the gatekeeper for access to Qutbuddin. Qutbuddin exerts his influence—often, though not always, in his own interests—through resolving disputes, mediating conflicts with a neighbouring village, and setting norms for female mobility and, more recently, around expenditure levels for social ceremonies. Overall, links to Qutbuddin are useful for residents, but can also be exploitative and expensive.<sup>63</sup>

The Sar-i-Pul study villages are similar to those from Badakhshan, given the former's semi-mountainous terrain and precarious rain-fed agricultural economy, which has been severely drought affected. There is no evidence of deep dependence on landlords or of predatory behaviour of privileged included elites, as was found in Kandahar. Each village has one case household with characteristics of the privileged included, but they are not linked outward to politically powerful actors like those in Kandahar. In this way, they are more similar to Qutbuddin, having considerable local influence but lacking the resources to be interesting to those outside the area. This also means there are no cases classified as secondary included in Sar-i-Pul, since those with influence

63 Household Khilar-43 was charged a fee it could not afford for Qutbuddin's assistance in resolving a dispute, while Khilar-52 sold an ox to Qutbuddin, who then did not pay the full amount. Qutbuddin's position meant Khilar-52 could not complain, so it was left without the ox or the cash it needed to repay debts.

locally often have little to offer others of similar wealth or status. Kushlak is poor, has relatively equal land distribution and was badly affected by recent periods of drought. Its local commander and head of the CDC, the head of household Kushlak-43, has not appeared active in seeking outward connections, perhaps reflecting the poor resource position of the village. He does exhibit more of the signs of the traditional patron, and his relationships with poorer households, including study households Kushlak-51 and Kushlak-52, are imbued with more obligation than those of the village leaders in Kandahar. The household's status and obligations are shown in how it runs its local shop, not pressuring people for repayment due to the need to care for others. While not gaining personally from the little aid coming to the village, the household head also has not been active in seeking more. He does not appear to have been capable of leading the NSP CDC effectively. The resources have been invested for the village's benefit, but a share was spent on a generator without a plan for funding the fuel it requires. The head of Kushlak-43's influence, along with that of other elders, is visible in establishing community norms defining belonging. This is particularly the case in terms of girls' education. There is no school in the village, and boys travel to the district centre to study. Many respondent households noted a willingness to send girls to school, but they are not willing to be the first to do so and risk their reputations in the village. They are waiting for elders to lead the way, which is not happening.

Pishin is quite different. It is better resourced than the other two Sar-i-Pul villages in terms of services, agricultural land and irrigation water. It has a capable leader in the head of household Pishin-20, who has brought cohesion to the village. While he has considerable formal and informal power in the village and the district as head of both CDC *shuras*, he is also oriented to the village's wider welfare. This may be due to his long history of leadership, including organising joint migration to Pakistan and a return to the village. He has worked to provide electricity in the village, communal water pumps and a girls' school.

Sarband has a shorter settlement history than the others, is ethnically mixed and is characterised by

considerable outside ownership of village lands. These factors may account in part for the lack of social orientation among the leadership of both the Arab and Pashtun settlements, exemplified by the dysfunction and corruption of their NSP CDCs. The head of household Sarband-09 is an official and de facto head of the Arab CDC. He demonstrates greater self-interest as a privileged elite through reporting on how he has used CDC funds for his own gain. This places him closer to the privileged elite in the Kandahar villages. This self-interested behaviour extends outside of the CDC's operations as well. He reportedly appropriated the refugee card of household Sarband-13 for his own gain. His social and economic position left no recourse for complaint.

The Faryab case does not provide as much detail regarding elite positions and behaviour as the others. However, one point relevant to this section is the role played by the elders in Hisaar in organising village security through a range of means, including arming school guards to protect the school from being burned down, negotiating with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to limit its visits, and efforts to reconcile the few men in the village who had direct connections to the Taliban. While these efforts have assisted the village overall, internal power struggles have also motivated the elders to engage in these actions to maintain their privileged positions.

The data clearly shows how villagers with social and/or economic power have a significant effect on village welfare, for better or worse. New structures like NSP CDCs also provide opportunities for elites to further their efforts, whether in their own or the community's interests. The precariousness of livelihoods seems to influence the orientation of the elite toward either personal gain or social good. This is because in areas where village survival is threatened, working to strengthen the village is also in the interest of the elites. Therefore, poor village resource positions constrain elite abilities to leverage their individual positions. The key point is that the role of village elites, and therefore of local social hierarchies, cannot be ignored in considering how to increase rural livelihood security or promote growth in Afghanistan. Agencies must understand how the elite engage in villages to determine if they are likely to be supportive of planned interventions,

or capture them for their own purposes. In contexts like the Kandahar villages, assessing whether the planned intervention may do more harm than good is a first step. The next step would be determining how to begin addressing the inequalities present in the village, in order to pave the way for future interventions.

## 5.2 Hierarchical relationships

As noted above, each study village presents its own internal social hierarchy; some display wide disparities in wealth and status while others are far more compressed. Contextual characteristics play a role in the breadth of inequalities found. Irrespective of the breadth of inequalities, each village provides evidence of hierarchical relationships where the less well-resourced have sought connections with those better positioned to provide needed services or employment. These relationships extend outside of the village in some cases. This section examines the diversity of hierarchical relationships present in the study villages. They are discussed according to the extent of dependence or adversity characterising them, starting with relationships in which the clients—those in the weaker position—have to compromise the most to obtain, keep or benefit from the connection. These are adverse relationships, in which obligation on the part of the better-resourced party is minimal. Next, patronage relationships with less obvious potential for exploitation or less risk for the client are discussed, followed by charitable relationships. The latter are imbued with the most obligation, but are not immune to the economic downturn experienced in many locations, or processes of modernisation bringing with them growing interest in individual advancement. All of these relationships tend to support coping and survival, rather than accumulation. This differentiates them from the way the privileged and secondarily included elites use upward connections from a stronger resource base to enable economic advancement.

### *Adverse relationships*

The relationships described in this section are characterised by adverse incorporation, meaning their terms and conditions tend to have negative



impact on the well-being of the clients. Clients often enter into these relationships when there are few other choices available to achieve a measure of predictability. They are less desirable because they tend to require a high level of dependence or are highly risky. In many cases, they enable the better-positioned party to accumulate based on the other's weak position. The types of relationships identified as adverse include sharecropping arrangements and employment relations. However, there is variability in how the adverse nature of the relationships affects households. The ability of a household to diversify across workers into activities characterised by less dependence helps some; for others, contextual factors such as less concentrated landholdings and greater choice of landlords make a difference.

A number of case households from the Kandahar villages show evidence of being enmeshed in highly unequal sharecropping relationships with more powerful members of the community. This is more common among the households in Lalakai, due to the primary landowner's strong grip on power. However, having more male workers and alternative sources of informal credit has assisted Household Lalakai-16 to reduce its dependence on land from this source. Lalakai-00 and Lalakai-12, the poorest households across both Kandahar villages, provide extreme cases of adverse incorporation because they have been less able to diversify away from activities associated with the landlord. For Lalakai-00, an injury while working the landlord's land meant the head could no longer work. Instead of assisting the poorer household, the landlord took away the sharecrop contract and associated housing, moving the family out of the village to very poor accommodations nearby. The female head is the only worker in the household, working as a servant in the landlord's house for food and other in-kind payments. The household cannot jeopardise this relationship or they will lose their only means of meagre survival. Household Lalakai-12 also has a female working in the landlord's household and a sharecropping arrangement. Both provide food security, but at the acknowledged cost of needing to "take care of the connection in order not to lose lands and work." However, this household is positioned between the extreme dependence of

Lalakai-00 and the stronger placement of Lalakai-16 because two sons work outside of the landlord's control, which provides the household with a bit more room to manoeuvre.

The second Kandahar village also provides one example of highly unequal sharecrop arrangements. Household Julan-46 lost its access to sharecrop land after a 20-year history with its landlord. This happened at least partially because of a perceived lack of loyalty. The female household head reported that the landlord wanted farmers to work "honestly" on the land—meaning not to work for multiple farmers at one time. Her sons had more than one contract, so she felt this had a role in the loss of land. The household's need for credit from the landlord as part of its coping strategy means it could not risk the relationship with him by complaining about the loss of sharecrop contract. Therefore its voice is diminished because of a lack of alternative credit options, while the sons' initiative in seeking multiple work opportunities was not seen by the landlord as something to encourage.

Similar evidence of the potential adverse conditions for sharecroppers is found in other villages, but to a lesser extent. For example, household Toghloq-69 in Badakhshan had more room to manoeuvre when an existing landlord changed his terms and refused to provide fertiliser; the head of household chose to work for another. Similarly, Toghloq-70's experience of a sudden withdrawal of a sharecrop arrangement motivated the head to sharecrop from relatives, with whom blood ties reduced the likelihood of such arbitrary behaviour. In both contexts, landholdings were less concentrated than in the Kandahar villages, enabling greater choice among landlords. The case of Sar-i-Pul household Sarband-13 shows the poor bargaining position of clients. While the household has been able to develop and maintain a long-term sharecrop arrangement with a set of wealthy brothers from the Pashtun part of the village, its terms and those of the credit they provide fall far short of meeting the household's basic needs. The household only receives a one-in-six share of product, compared to one-in-three or four for others, since the landowners provide all inputs and all debt must be repaid at harvest when prices

are lower. The head and his son often have had to migrate to Pakistan to earn enough for household survival.

Employment relationships also involve potential for exploitative terms or considerable risks for the workers. These are generally evident in the means through which workers access work—through smugglers in the case of migration to Iran, contractors for brick and carpet-weaving work, or tied labour agreements. These situations were all more commonly reported in the villages in Sar-i-Pul and Faryab, where drought has pushed people off the land and into non-farm employment. The drought conditions have exacerbated the potential for negative employment terms by reducing the availability of on-farm work opportunities and increasing the supply of workers migrating to brick-fields outside Mazar-i-Sharif (in the case of Sar-i-Pul respondents) or farther afield to Iran and, in some cases, Pakistan. This has meant the supply of workers is considerably more than the opportunities available, giving employers more power to set wages and conditions in their favour. It also makes it difficult to find work independently. Men seeking work outside of the northern study villages reported relying on labour contractors or smugglers to intermediate. Respondents accessed brickmaking work through labour contractors who earn 10 to 20 Afs per 1,000 bricks their clients make. Men wishing to illegally migrate to Iran pay traffickers about 30,000 Afs to be smuggled into the country, payable through wages once in Iran. This delays the sending of remittances, making family members left in the village—often women and children in extended family arrangements—dependent on credit or extended family members for support until the debt is paid and funds are sent home. The extent of their dependence is determined by the presence and the ages of sons. Those without sons old enough to help the family are the most dependent on others, as a result of prevailing gender norms that limit women’s access to local markets to buy necessities, to work or to travel to collect remittance payments from nearby towns. Even the dangers of being deported, held for ransom by smugglers along the transit route and going into significant debt are not enough under current economic conditions to stop families from resorting to this risky livelihood strategy.

Tied labour arrangements, reported only among study households in the Sar-i-Pul villages, are another potentially exploitative form of labour relationship. These relationships provide a link to a wealthier household and are favoured because they provide security in the immediate term. This security takes the form of guaranteed work for a period of time and, in some cases, shelter, food and clothing for the worker. This reduces a household’s consumption costs. However, as the example of household Kushlak-52 shows, the term of work may not be guaranteed if conditions change for the employer. When land-based work declined due to drought, the employer of one son terminated the arrangement without notice or obligation for payment during the remaining period of the agreement. Yet the lack of fixed contracts does not mean workers can leave if new opportunities present themselves. For example, the son in widow-headed household Sarband-17 worked four out of the six months of his tied labour arrangement before opting to migrate to Iran; his employer did not pay him anything, as he had not worked the full term, and the family had no recourse to complain. Evidence from the head of household Pishin-32 shows that in the past these arrangements may have offered more security, in part due to lower land costs. He himself entered tied labour agreements when he was young. This security of work and income allowed him to gradually save and buy land, moving out of these dependent relationships. However, the recent drought and a lack of male workers in the household have led to a severe decline. Sale of the land bought through his past contract labour is now one basis of household survival.

The final example of adverse employment relationships is from Faryab. Livelihood activities less dependent on the land gained importance during the reported periods of drought. Women’s contributions through weaving carpets in Chakar and Hisaar, and *gillim* or *palas* in Efroz, aided household survival, though with considerably less impact than in the past. This is because of changes in the way weavers access markets. They are now much less autonomous in terms of carpet design and marketing.<sup>64</sup> Households used to supply

64 Adam Pain and Moharram Ali, “Understanding Markets in Afghanistan: A Case Study of Carpets and the Andkhoy Carpet Market”

their own wool and designs for carpets, selling independently in local markets. Now *bais* (wealthy traders) from nearby cities and beyond control the market, and weavers produce to specification and earn half of the pre-arranged sales price.

*Before in the village we had a free bazaar so everywhere we could sell carpets and that was useful for us. But now it is something like a monopoly on our carpet-weaving and this method is not useful for us. This just generates benefits for the bais.*

– Male participant in FGD with poor men, Chakar

Earnings have declined and work is not guaranteed. In fact, female respondents recounted the hardship of the work and explained that it is now mainly done in times of crisis. Only households without other options were reported to weave carpets when agricultural conditions were good.

The presence of village social inequalities and the importance of hierarchical relationships in the efforts of poorer respondents to gain some security result in an inability to complain or refuse “requests” from those who are better off. This is evident in the case of Kandahar household Julan-46’s treatment by its landlord and the reported appropriation of Sarband-13’s refugee card in Sar-i-Pul. Other examples were found in Sar-i-Pul and Badakhshan. For example, even though the female head of Sar-i-Pul household Kushlak-51 acknowledged the help the head of Kushlak-43 provides, she also recognised the fact that his status and reputation make complaining impossible, even if he does something wrong. Similarly, the male head of Kushlak-47 noted in general that poorer people cannot say anything against those with social connections. In Khilar in Badakhshan, a general posted outside the village “requested” that household Khilar-49 send its eldest son come to work with him. The household head could not refuse and risk angering the general. The son was killed, causing great personal and economic loss for the family.

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(Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2004).

These examples highlight how reliance of the poor on social relationships with better-resourced people inside and outside the villages reproduces existing inequalities. This is largely due to the lack of better alternatives, as well as the value placed on social inclusion. Households cannot risk their position by not conforming with the status quo or by questioning those in power. The need for conformity and the lack of more autonomous means of accessing livelihood resources reinforces existing power relations and the dependent positions of poorer, less outwardly connected residents.

### *Patronage relationships*

Patronage is a central part of Afghan life because relationships are needed to access a range of everyday services. Therefore, respondents across wealth groups sought to make links to those who can help them gain access to work, aid, contracts, health services or other resources. In the case of the wealthy, these relationships are often able to support accumulation strategies, as discussed previously. This section explores the use of patronage relationships among less wealthy respondents, where patrons are important for day-to-day coping and survival rather than strategies of accumulation. The loss of these relationships would leave a considerable shortfall in livelihood outcomes, given the smaller range of social and material resources these households hold. Hence considerable effort goes into developing these relationships, as well as maintaining rights of access. These relationships are less exploitative than those described in the previous section. They are still hierarchical, but not as inimical to the clients’ future well-being.

The case study data provides examples of the use of patrons to access work, aid and security. In the case of employment, links to relatives inside or outside the village are one way families obtain work for their members. For example, Badakhshan household Toghloq-77 has an uncle in Kabul working with the National Directorate of Security. Through him, a son obtained a job in the police force. A local commander named Mahboob provided employment-related help to household Shur Qul-23. The household is related to Mahboob, and he was able to

get a local construction contract through the help of Zalmay Khan; he then provided Shur Qul-23 with work. Shur Qul-34 used an early patronage link with Najmuddin to request employment for villagers at the local lapis lazuli mine after Najmuddin gained political power in the province.

Others reported relying on their reputations as good, well-behaved or deserving workers to obtain employment from villagers in higher positions; in these cases, reputation was the basis of the link to a patron. For example, the disabled daughter-in-law of Sar-i-Pul household Pishin-23 used the sympathy of village leaders to obtain the post of literacy course teacher, while sons of widow-headed households Sarband-00 and Sarband-17 used reputations as hard workers to establish connections to the head and treasurer of the *shura* and obtain sharecrop land and harvesting work. Others obtain credit, often as salary advances, through their links to patrons. Households Kushlak-51 and Kushlak-47 both rely on such arrangements, which form an important consumption smoothing mechanism but can limit options for work when the advance must be repaid.

Aid allocations enter village social environments and their complex webs of relationships and hierarchies. This means social realities may overshadow programme rules and intentions.<sup>65</sup> Connections are often used to obtain more aid than allocated, or aid to which one is not entitled. This issue was explored in more depth in Sar-i-Pul. There, the disabled head of household Pishin-30 using his link to the head of the village *shura* to lobby for seeds allocated to those with irrigated land, although he had rain-fed land; he sold the seeds and used the funds for his consumption needs. Household Kushlak-52 reported receiving a loan from the NSP funds of the *shura* due to a family connection to Kushlak-43, while some households in Sarband were allowed to claim work rights of absent villagers under a food for work programme, against the programme's rules. Other examples include evidence that the NSP may not

65 For an analysis of this in the case of microcredit see Kantor, *From Access to Impact*.

be as democratic as envisioned (such evidence was found in Lalakai and Julan in Kandahar, Sarband in Sar-i-Pul, and Toghloq in Badakhshan). Those not benefiting from aid programmes generally blame their lack of connections and the corruption of the system. This feeds a negative atmosphere of competition and perceived discrimination. It also points to the danger of idealising communities as closer to the people and less likely than other aid delivery mechanisms to be tainted by interests outside those of the programme. Instead, programme designers need to understand the potential impact that social factors such as patronage and self-interest may have on the delivery of programmes and the distribution of their outcomes.

The relevance of patronage relationships in the Faryab village of Chakar can be seen in Auraz Zabet's role in providing security.<sup>66</sup> This connection meant the village was significantly less affected by local insurgents than the other study villages, as the quote below illustrates:

*The Taliban come to the villages at night. Most of the time they come to Efroz...But they do not come to Chakar, because Auraz Zabet has taken up arms and the Taliban are afraid of him.*

– Male FGD participant, Chakar

The household evidence also shows how poorer households explicitly invest in social relationships or engage in behaviours to show belonging in order to ensure access to patronage. For example, in Sar-i-Pul many (though not all) of the poorer households reported using credit to buy an animal for sacrifice on Eid al-Adha, or at other times when such action is culturally necessary. This “cost” represents an investment in social inclusion. Again, in Sar-i-Pul there were cases where households reported establishing a link, strategically or by chance, with a wealthy individual in the past which they work to maintain for the help it continues to bring. The head

66 Auraz Zabet seemed to have had less of a role in the village than Qutbuddin in Khilar, Badakhshan. There is no evidence that he handled internal disputes or attempted to set local norms. Therefore, he is not discussed in the section on elites.



of household Kushlak-47 still makes use of a connection made by his father to obtain irregular work for himself and his son:

*The bai was a friend of my father and that is why he has given me this job. Otherwise nobody would take an old man like me to work—there are so many people competing for jobs.*

The head of household Pishin-30 met a wealthy visitor to the village years ago, served him tea and food, and gave straw to his donkey. This relationship has been maintained, and now the wealthy man's sons provide Pishin-30 with help when needed through sharing oxen for ploughing or helping with the harvest.

### Charitable relationships

Charitable relationships are hierarchical but also imbued with an Islamic obligation to give. However, this obligation is mitigated by ability. While acts of charity are an important safety net for the poorest respondent households, this source of support has been affected by the sustained drought-related decline over many years in Faryab and Sar-i-Pul, and the opium cultivation ban along with the dry years in Badakhshan. Almost all households in these study areas noted a decline. In fact, some of the relatively wealthy study households in these areas, and particularly Sar-i-Pul household Pishin-26, feel that the label *bai* no longer fits their status. The label remains, however, excluding Pishin-26 from aid allocations and resulting in demands for help and hospitality that it cannot meet. Some respondents also reported a general decline in community cohesion, not just levels of giving. For example, Pishin-17 stated: “Before, people cared more about each other, the rich people did not let the poor people go hungry. Now there is no compassion, feeling, responsibility. They are all gone.” This may signal more than the effects of economic decline; it may also indicate that processes of modernisation are slowly prioritising individual interests over collective needs.

Case households from Shur Qul in Badakhshan, which obtain a considerable portion of their basic needs through charity, illustrate the precariousness of being in this position. Household Shur Qul-27 is

headed by a 75-year-old male and has three other members, but no able-bodied male labour. One relative in the village helped the family get an electricity connection and gives charity annually to the household, in the form of a *seer* (seven kilograms) of rice, one kilogram of tea and one of sugar, and some soap. In addition to this, about 20 other households each provide two kilograms of wheat as charity post-harvest. However, the reliability of these donations depends on the level of agricultural output. The head of household Shur Qul-33 was clearer about the recent decline in levels of help. His household of eight relies on irregular wage income, charity and WFP food aid linked to girls' school attendance. While he has many relatives in the village, few provide help because, in his view, they are made happy by the worsening condition of others. This reflects his situation, in which he had to leave work in the lapis mine after 20 years, due to its effect on his health. His ill health has made him dependent on others, a change in circumstance that has brought him shame and dismay at his loss of dignity. He noted how the nature of relationships has changed:

*In the past livelihood was not important to build relations. People loved and helped each other in case of need in any situation. But now it is not like that. Whoever loses his livelihood loses his relations as well, because now people are eager to strengthen their livelihoods and they do not care for relations.*

Good production during the 2009 harvesting season led to a reported increase in charitable giving in Badakhshan, Sar-i-Pul and Faryab. These variations illustrate both the embedded nature of these forms of support in village social life—they may decline in difficult times but they rebound—and the precariousness of a life dependent upon them. The precariousness of those households dependent on charity, whether to the extent of the households in Shur Qul, or to the lesser degree found among households in other villages, derives from two sources. The first is a lack of organised giving of alms, which has been found to be a characteristic of charity in the Afghan context.<sup>67</sup> This is the case in

67 Kaja Borchgrevink, “Religious Actors and Civil Society in Post-2001 Afghanistan” (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2007).

all but one of the study villages. Khilar is different. It is the smallest and least resourced village in terms of facilities, but it has the only reported communal system of charity. Respondents across wealth groups reported providing grain to the head of the NSP *shura* to be held as a grain bank. Those in need can access the grain and repay it in the future. The absence of a collective system in the other villages means that levels of charity provided to the most poor are not guaranteed, and that individual providers can continually decide based on economic circumstances if they will give and to whom. Therefore the poor must continually maintain their reputations as deserving while facing considerable variation in amounts received. The increased number of those in need and the declining resources of the relatively wealthy under such conditions combine to weaken patronage links in the short term, if not long the term, because the wealthy cannot meet the rising need.

The second source of precariousness comes from the overall humanitarian rather than developmental orientation of charitable giving.<sup>68</sup> Zakat and other forms of charity are generally intended to provide basic needs to recipients, such as food or clothing. This aids immediate survival, but it does not make any effort to change the position of the recipients and decrease their long-term dependence. In fact, a historical study of charity in Islamic societies concludes that the giving of charity can reinforce existing social hierarchies by demonstrating the social position of the giver and requiring acquiescence to the existing social system from the receiver (in other words, a demonstration that one is deserving).<sup>69</sup> It would be interesting to explore new ways to organise and use Islamic forms of charity to achieve developmental ends, such as that identified in Kunduz, where some mullahs encouraged people to help their zakat recipients to set up small enterprises.<sup>70</sup>

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68 Borchgrevink, “Religious Actors.”

69 Amy Singer, “Soup and Sadaqa: Charity in Islamic Societies,” *Historical Research* 79, no. 205 (2006): 306–324.

70 Borchgrevink, “Religious Actors.”

### 5.3 Reciprocal relationships

The case evidence illustrates the considerable role of the moral economy—in other words, an economy influenced by principles of reciprocity—in the study villages.<sup>71</sup> Across the study villages, and even in the Kandahar study villages where elites operated to their own advantage, there was evidence of the importance of exchanges among equals to livelihood security, and even advancement for some of the less wealthy households. Most of these mutual exchanges took the form of informal credit in cash or kind.<sup>72</sup> The robustness of these networks varied according to village resource positions as well as household characteristics.

For one middle-income household from each of the two Kandahar villages, informal credit connections have supported small improvements in livelihood security. Household Lalakai-03 was able to move out of a sharecropping arrangement with the main landlord due to the male head’s willingness to risk investing in his own enterprise in the city; this was enabled by strong informal credit relationships and Kandahar’s vibrant informal urban economy. In the case of Julan-56, links to the wife’s family, which is better off, and a close friend of the male head provide consistent access to credit free of interest. This credit has facilitated the energetic focus of the household heads on a range of non-farm and land-based livelihood activities, which have slowly improved the family’s condition.

In other contexts, reciprocal support networks are under pressure, as is the case for charitable relations, due to the negative effects of drought and other economic and natural phenomena outside of the respondents’ control. Most respondent households in the Badakhshan villages of Shur Qul and Toghloq reported being able to access interest-free informal credit from relatives or village shopkeepers. This form of mutual help seems more common than in

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71 James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 1977).

72 For more on credit networks and rural livelihoods in Afghanistan see Klijn and Pain, *Finding the Money*; and Kantor, *From Access to Impact*.

Khilar. There, households reported relying much more on credit from sources outside of the village—namely, valley shopkeepers. This had detrimental livelihood effects, since this credit was reported to be given with interest, even when it was in kind for food. The weakness of local credit relations reflects the social and economic marginality of the village and the declining or struggling livelihood trajectory of all of the study

In spite of the importance placed on relationships of mutual obligation in Afghanistan as a means of resilience, there are also limits to these relationships that cannot be ignored.

households. This is due in part to loss of opium income and dry conditions, which have led to sale of livestock assets. These conditions have weakened mutual help relations, illustrating their precariousness in times of hardship, particularly in more remote locations.

Informal credit relationships can come at the cost of a reduced choice of lenders, as the case of household Shur Qul-4 in Badakhshan shows. It learned the hard way to purchase only from its shopkeeper relative after buying some goods at a lower price in the district centre. For a time following the purchase, credit relations with the relative stopped, with comments made about the household's ability to go to Baharak for supplies. As the head related, "After that we stopped bringing things from other places and we resumed borrowing from him again."

When compared to the other Shur Qul households reliant on charity, poor household Shur Qul-36 illustrates the value of having the resources to contribute to the maintenance of mutual help relations. This household of 11 has three male workers, owns land and has livestock, giving it material resources to work with to meet its needs without charity. The head also has strong

help relationships with more powerful members of the community. The male head is clear about the value of credit relations with peers, including shopkeepers. He noted that his reputation as a hard worker who repays whenever he has money means he has no problems when borrowing. He clearly invests time and energy in his mutual relationships, and reported, "Relations with other people are very valuable for me...they are kept secure by mutual respect, by visiting and helping each other in case of need."

Evidence from the villages in Sar-i-Pul and Faryab shows informal credit to be the main and most inclusive local form of safety net. The relative importance of credit increased during the drought period, as it was a primary means of purchasing food at seasonal low points or meeting urgent medical costs. Therefore, unlike the Kandahar case, where access to informal credit has assisted some households to slowly prosper, in these contexts it has been a coping mechanism. The majority of households could access credit and were able to maintain this access up until the final stages of the drought, building up significant debt burdens. Creditworthiness was illustrated through having sufficient male workers in the family, having a family member working in Iran or Pakistan, or, in the Faryab case, having women weaving carpets. The importance of credit to livelihood security during this crisis highlights the value of investing so much in social relationships.

Evidence from both Sar-i-Pul and Faryab suggests that long-lasting drought has exhausted many informal mutual support mechanisms. Cash credit was reported to be less available compared to before the drought, especially for poorer households, and poorer Kushlak saw credit from its own sources drying up earlier than the other villages in Sar-i-Pul. The constraints on lending within local networks affected wealthier respondent households too. The larger loan amounts they needed to meet daily needs were unavailable. A wealthier respondent from Chakar in Faryab resorted to selling eight *jeribs* of his rain-fed land to meet household expenditures during the drought, noting that this was the only option available to him. Therefore, in spite of

the importance placed on relationships of mutual obligation in Afghanistan as a means of resilience, there are also limits to these relationships that cannot be ignored.

Across respondents reliant on mutual support networks, maintaining their position in the community and maintaining a reputation for repaying credit are key concerns. This means repaying credit is a priority for all respondents, though there are differing abilities to fulfil this intent. The prioritisation of debt repayment slowed drought recovery among Sar-i-Pul households after the good rains of 2009. Income in some cases went to debt repayment over improving food intake or investing in agricultural inputs to ensure future credit availability. Other respondent households resorted to more negative strategies to ensure repayment, such as land and livestock sales or marrying young daughters for the bride price.

The experiences of the study households show that reciprocal relationships are not an abstract form of risk mitigation; insurance in the West might be defined in this way, given the likelihood that a need to make a claim may never occur—the possibility of loss exists but is not very high. In the study villages, the high likelihood of needing help, particularly in the form of credit, means reciprocal relationships are more akin to long-term gift-giving relationships,

in which a continuous balance of exchanges between members is central to their continuance and to a member's continued inclusion.<sup>73</sup> This fits the study evidence showing that those who cannot reciprocate—often due to a lack of male labourers in the household, ill health or disability—end up being closed out of mutual help networks, and instead become reliant on charity (in the cases of Shur Qil-27 and Shur Qul-33) or highly exploitative forms of work (in the cases of Lalakai-00 and Lalakai-12 in Kandahar).

## 5.4 Conclusion

This section used household case evidence to highlight the importance of social relationships to understanding experiences of poverty and livelihood insecurity. These range from unequal relationships to those imbued with different levels of obligation and reciprocal exchanges among equals. Ignoring the social context in efforts to address poverty or foster growth may only strengthen existing inequalities, instead of helping the poor find ways of improving their social positions and material outcomes. Investing in understanding the social context is therefore vital to designing poverty reduction programmes that tackle the social causes of poverty and not just the characteristics of being poor.

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73 Jean-Philippe Platteau, "Mutual Insurance as an Elusive Concept in Traditional Rural Communities," *Journal of Development Studies* 3, no. 6 (1997): 764-96.



## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper illustrates the importance of understanding social relationships and social inequalities in efforts to improve rural livelihood security. It does so through evidence from in-depth household case studies of rural livelihood change in Kandahar, Badakhshan, Sar-i-Pul and Faryab. It applies a relational concept of poverty linked to patterns of inclusion and exclusion, which moves away from defining poverty simply as a lack of resources. Instead, poverty is understood to be created and maintained through social and economic systems that operate in favour of some over others, and through the ability of the privileged to use their positions, consciously or not, to maintain the status quo. A lack of transparent and reliably functioning formal institutions means those less powerful must invest in relationships with the connected and better off, and with each other, to achieve some measure of livelihood security.

The case evidence at both village and household levels demonstrates the relevance of this way of understanding poverty and insecurity in rural Afghanistan. It shows evidence of personal accumulation based on the dependence of others; the need of the poorest, who are least endowed with able-bodied labour, to invest in precarious forms of dependent relationships for survival; the importance of diversifying relationships to reduce dependence for those able to do so; the variable reliability of charity and obligation in times of economic decline and in the early phases of modernisation; and the high value placed on mutual support relationships and belonging, as well as the great willingness to invest in maintaining them. However, the reliability of these reciprocal relationships also suffers in times of drought and economic downturn.

The case study data shows no evidence of collective action to challenge the systemic insecurity many poor rural Afghans face. The few cases of advancement came at the individual level, based on connections combined with location or existing

material resource bases. In fact, some households expressed fear of contesting exploitative acts or the positions of local power-holders because the risk of retribution through loss of social inclusion is too high. The risks and low returns associated with the livelihood diversification options available to poorer respondent households, particularly those associated with agriculture and livestock activities, also limit advancement potential for many. Some of these risks are related to the methods through which poorer respondents reported obtaining sources of income—labour contractors, traffickers, subcontractors or sharecropping arrangements. These findings point to the need to support processes of collective action that can build solidarity among the less powerful in areas of mutual interest. They also illustrate the need to support existing local mutual support mechanisms to strengthen and sustain them.

Current policy processes in Afghanistan have shown neither willingness nor the ability to incorporate the social complexities identified through this research into practical programming.<sup>74</sup> A simplistic understanding of poverty as a lack of resources informs programme design. In this way, the processes risk investing considerable financial and human resources in programmes that do not address the root causes of poverty and livelihood insecurity, and that may reinforce the inequalities keeping people poor. This study has shown that social relationships are an integral feature of rural life; programmes are implemented in complex social environments, and will necessarily affect and be affected by them. Therefore, programmes need to incorporate this reality into the planning process to improve programme equity, efficiency and effectiveness. The remainder of this section provides some suggestions for good practice,

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<sup>74</sup> For more detailed analysis of Kabul Process policy documents in the agriculture and rural development sector in relation to the findings of this paper, see Paula Kantor and Adam Pain, *Poverty in Afghan Policy: Enhancing Solutions through Better Defining the Problem* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

which can help to incorporate social complexity within rural development programming. This will help target the causes of poverty and insecurity and not just its outward symptoms.

### ***Develop strategies to engage with village elites***

The study evidence clearly shows that the role of village elites cannot be ignored in efforts to improve rural livelihood security. Time must be built into programme development and implementation phases to assess how elites engage in the villages and what role they will play in relation to the programme. In some cases, programmes can build on their existing philanthropic role; in other cases, their potential to expropriate programme control and benefits needs to be neutralised. In cases like the Kandahar villages, where elites hold a virtual monopoly of power, a completely different strategy involving longer engagement processes and coalition-building may be needed to create alternative power centres and support, before rural development interventions can start.

### ***Recognise that programme implementation may feed into local patronage systems***

Programme planners must recognise that their programmes enter complex social environments characterised by patronage. Programme benefits may be used within these systems for ends other than those planned for, such as strengthening social networks. Therefore, communities should not be idealised as equitable, democratic sites, closer to the people and therefore less likely to be corrupt or characterised by patronage than other institutional structures. Efforts should be made to develop monitoring systems sensitive to these potential distortions, which can document and learn from them for future planning, as well as halt abusive practices.

### ***Support group formation processes and long-term transformative change***

In Afghanistan, the pressure for short-term success often means that short-term projects

define action instead of investment in long-term processes, and outputs instead of outcomes qualify as measures of success. These characteristics of the aid context mean limited attention is given to measures that have more potential to address the systemic nature of the causes of poverty identified in this paper. This needs to change if the social causes of poverty are to be eliminated and not merely mitigated. Specifically, more effort must be put into fostering processes of group formation and collective action, in order to enable action against existing power-holders. Such action may seem too risky for individuals, but becomes possible for groups through strength in numbers.

Aid actors should invest in group formation processes, recognising the inherent value of such projects, and allow them to develop their own capability to identify appropriate means of countering existing inequalities. This is difficult and time consuming, and may not fit the “criticalness” driving Afghan policy processes. However, the payoff in supporting locally driven processes of social change can be considerable.

The different forms of adverse relationships identified by this study provide diverse opportunities to facilitate change. Cases where power-holders are outside the village may provide more scope for change in the medium term. Examples include working with migrant labourers to organise them, thus increasing protection and negotiating power with labour contractors or smugglers. Similar efforts could work among carpet weavers or those in sharecrop arrangements with landowners outside the village. In all cases, those taking the risks need to define the terms of engagement with those providing land, employment or other valuable resources.

Addressing inequalities is most challenging in contexts like the Kandahar villages. Even beginning to speak openly about inequalities in efforts to organise residents may bring retribution. Identifying existing residents—perhaps mullahs or others who already have or could build influence with the elites—may be one of the few ways forward.

***Identify ways to provide access to resources that challenge existing inequalities***

The evidence presented here shows that fostering agricultural growth and reducing rural poverty is about more than providing access to inputs or services. These approaches may have immediate practical benefits, but they are not guaranteed to be equitably distributed. They may also support existing inequalities instead of challenging them, leaving the poor trapped in dependent relationships in order to secure access. Efforts to improve access to resources or employment for the poor need to acknowledge that access may be mediated through relationships to others and seek ways to break these connections. Providing greater and more accessible information about the availability of state or non-governmental assistance and the criteria for qualifying is one possibility; another more macro-level option is intensifying efforts to provide legal means of labour migration to neighbouring countries.

***Understand and support existing informal support systems***

Finally, the case evidence shows the importance and prevalence of local support systems in the forms of credit and charity. It also shows the variability of support from these sources, and therefore their precariousness. Programmes seeking to promote growth, reduce poverty and improve livelihood security need to take these existing systems into account. For example, microfinance institutions need to acknowledge the importance of informal credit and understand how their products will interact with existing informal credit sources and the relationships that underpin them. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled and its partners also could consider how to institutionalise the forms of village charity to make them systematic, transparent and reliable, as well as orient them in the direction of development and social welfare.

## Appendix 1: Village Details

**Table A1: Kandahar villages**

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Lalakai</i>	<i>Julan</i>
Location/accessibility	Peri-urban; 10-15 minute drive from Kandahar city	Peri-urban; 10-15 minute drive from Kandahar city
Demographics	Pashtun (Popalzai); low educational attainment and enrolment; high in-migration (sharecrop for main landlord)	Pashtun (Popalzai); low educational attainment and enrolment
Livelihoods	Non-farm labour, agriculture; opium in past, but not extensively cultivated	Agriculture, livestock, non-farm labour
Landholdings	High inequality; two land-holders, one with significant sharecropping relations	Inequality, but less than Lalakai; approx. 500 ha irrigated land in total
Aid/services	No school; district receives aid due to relative security	Primary school, but poor functioning, low attendance; literacy school for girls—commandeered by uneducated <i>malik</i> family
Local leaders	<i>Khan</i> with considerable, almost feudal control; also <i>malik</i> , head of CDC (self-appointed); armed for own protection	Six <i>maliks</i> : head, subhead and four others; head holds most power; heads CDC, for all <i>maliks</i> ' benefit
Conflict history	Outmigration during conflict; return during Taliban; relative security post-2001	Soviet period bombardment due to proximity to airport; outmigration during conflict; return during Taliban; relative security post-2001
Connections	Karzai's home district; <i>khan</i> linked to current central and provincial government	Karzai's home district; <i>maliks</i> linked to current central and provincial government

**Table A2: Badakhshan villages**

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Shur Qul</i>	<i>Toghloq</i>	<i>Khilar</i>
Location/accessibility	Three hour drive from district centre; 2,000 meters above sea level (MASL)	45 minute drive from district centre; 1,200 MASL; best placed for land, water and market access	Two hour drive from district centre; only recently connected to road from valley; 2,000 MASL
Demographics	Largely Sunni; few Ismaili households; long education history; high education attainment and attendance (both male and female)	Less education investment; school destroyed in conflict, not rebuilt until after 2001	Largely Ismaili and closely related; school was distant—few males benefited; higher school attendance than Toghloq now, but limited by need for children's labour



Livelihoods	Seasonal migration; livestock; lapis lazuli mines; opium at small scale; decline in opium and loss of link to mine	Agrarian economy; livestock; sharecrop in other villages; flourished with opium cultivation; resisted eradication but decline in cultivation post-2006; outmigration; army and police employment	Grain deficits; seasonal migration; wage labour; opium cultivation, but limited scale due to small landholdings; drought in 2008 led to migration to Iran
Landholdings	Low inequality; largest holding approx. 4 ha irrigated land; 160 ha irrigated land in total and 240 ha rain-fed land	High land inequality; 47 ha irrigated land in total and 13 ha rain-fed land	Pasture land reportedly taken for others—no resistance due to lack of power; 10 ha irrigated land and 40 ha rain-fed land
Aid/services	AKF: education, safe water, road improvement, micro hydro scheme; weak CDC	Opposition to CDC from local power-holders	Access to school and clinic in valley; no safe water; weak CDC, but did pave road to valley
Local leaders	Managed conflict in mujahiddin period but carried out own violence; link to power-holder in early 1990s	After 1989 local commanders appointed instead of chosen, brutal	Post-1992 village commander sought protection from a predatory commander
Conflict history	Local leader (selected) able to minimise exposure during 1980s	Strong resistance to pro-communist govt.; heavy conflict locally, but village defended	Religious minority status meant hostility and persecution 1978-92, but no direct war; post-1992 close to front line
Connections	Educated elite in govt./NGO positions; diverse political connections, including to commander controlling lapis mine for a period (Najmuddin); externally linked	Under Najmuddin's authority—he appointed local commanders; few other links for strategic advantage; distance from Zalmay Khan	Post-1992 link to protective commander (Qutbuddin)—patron who secured allegiance through ensuring physical security; no independent connections outside

Table A3: Sar-i-Pul villages

Characteristics	Kushlak	Pishin	Sarband
Location/accessibility	30 km from Sar-i-Pul town	28 km from Sar-i-Pul town	5 km from Sar-i-Pul town
Demographics	180 households; Uzbek	1,200 households; mainly Uzbek	1,100 households; large Arab settlement and separate Pashtun settlement; founded 90 years ago
Livelihoods	Agriculture, livestock rearing, non-farm labour; wool spinning	Agriculture; livestock, but less than in Kushlak; non-farm labour; wool spinning; weaving/hat making pre-drought	Agriculture, bonded labour, livestock rearing (camels, horses); non-farm labour; crafts; begging in Sar-i-Pul town
Landholdings	Average 10-15 <i>jeribs</i> rain-fed land, often located outside the village; spring in village, but in lower section so little irrigated land	Average holdings larger than in Kushlak; more irrigated land and more water access, though still constrained	Reportedly much land owned by Sar-i-Pul town residents; fewer residents own land but larger holdings; irrigation by flood storage pools
Aid/services	Public works (food for work); NSP generator—no funds for fuel; perceptions of Pishin capturing aid; no clinic or school	Clinic, boys' and girls' schools; many shops; district government; UNHCR aid to returnees; literacy and tailoring course for women	Two NSP <i>shuras</i> ; public works (food for work)
Local leaders	CDC <i>shura</i> head is former commander	Educated village elite; <i>shura</i> head is long-term local leader—led village in joint migration to Pakistan; more cohesion and joint action	Weak; local governance structures dysfunctional and corrupt; one CDC disbanded, other run for personal gain
Conflict history	Affected primarily by Afghan-Soviet war; internal displacement	Affected primarily by Afghan-Soviet war; internal displacement followed by joint migration to Pakistan	Two ethnic communities aided each other in different conflict phases; intense conflict led to migration internally and to Iran and Pakistan
Connections	Limited external connections; some to village Pishin; no international migration history—more insular	District centre; few connections outside; link to brick work in Pakistan from migration period	Connections to Sar-i-Pul town—many land owners, credit sources from there

Table A4: Faryab villages

Characteristics	Chakar	Hisaar	Efroz
Location/accessibility	4 km east of Dawlatabad district centre	5 km south of Dawlatabad district centre	6 km northwest of Dawlatabad district centre
Demographics	Turkmen with Uzbek and Arab minorities	Uzbek with Turkmen, Arab and Pashtun minorities	Pashtun
Livelihoods	Agriculture; livestock; carpet weaving; non-farm and off-farm work; labour migration	Agriculture; livestock; carpet weaving; non-farm and off-farm work; labour migration	Agriculture; livestock; <i>gillim/palas</i> weaving; non-farm and off-farm work; labour migration
Landholdings	Mainly irrigated with some rain-fed	Mainly irrigated with some rain-fed	Mainly rain-fed with some irrigated
Aid/services	Three NSP <i>shuras</i> linked to settlement history of three ethnic groups in village; two schools; electricity	Two NSP <i>shuras</i> —one for Pashtuns, who live separate from main village; one school and one madrasa; electricity	One NSP <i>shura</i> (discrimination felt); no female <i>shura</i> ; no school in village; electricity
Local leaders	Auraz Zabet—commander; led <i>arbaki</i> in 2009 to secure elections; killed May 2010	Arbab/elders intervening to try to protect the village—arming guards for school, negotiating with PRT to stay away	Little evidence of local leadership, cohesion working in village interests
Conflict history	Affected by both Afghan-Soviet conflict and mujahiddin period; worst affected under Taliban—migrated out; protected from current rise in insecurity (Zabet)	Affected by both Afghan-Soviet conflict and mujahiddin period; worst affected under Taliban—migrated out; recent rise in insecurity linked to ethnic mix and lack of protector	Rule of Rasul Pahlawan problematic—lost assets and migrated; Taliban time less problematic—returned; rise in insecurity affecting village; suspected of harbouring/being insurgents
Connections	Zabet had key role in providing physical security; some educated villagers with govt./ NGO jobs	No significant external connections	No significant external connections

## Appendix 2: Village Key

In the individual case studies that formed the basis of this paper, all study villages were referred to by alphabetical codes to ensure anonymity. These have now been changed to fictitious names (see Table A1 below) for ease of reader reference.

*Table A5: Fictitious Names and Original Codes for Study Villages*

<i>Province/District</i>	<i>Village name (fictitious)</i>	<i>Original code</i>
<i>Kandahar</i>		
Dand	Lalakai	KA
Dand	Julan	KB
<i>Badakhshan</i>		
Yamgan	Shur Qul	BA
Jurm	Toghloq	BB
Jurm	Khilar	BC
<i>Sar-i-Pul</i>		
Sayyad	Kushlak	SA
Sayyad	Pishin	SB
Sayyad	Sarband	SC
<i>Faryab</i>		
Dawlatabad	Chakar	FA
Dawlatabad	Hisaar	FB
Dawlatabad	Efroz	FC

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