



Evolving Terrain: Opium Poppy Cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2013

Paul Fishstein
February 2014



Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

Case Study

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About the Author

Paul Fishstein (MS, Agricultural and Resource Economics) is a former director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit whose Afghanistan experience goes back to 1977. He is currently an independent consultant.

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Acronyms

Afs	Afghanis, the Afghan unit of currency. During the time of research, 55 Afs was roughly equivalent to US\$1
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AOGs	Armed Opposition Groups
CSO	Central Statistics Organization
DAIL	Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
DDA	District Development Assembly
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RADP	Regional Agricultural Development Programme
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	(United Nations) World Food Programme

Glossary

<i>chars</i>	Hashish or the plant from which it comes (<i>cannabis sativus</i>)
<i>chowk</i>	Public square or meeting place
<i>fatwa</i>	Religious decree
<i>gadwadi</i>	Confusion, often conveying political disorder
<i>ghamu</i>	Vetch, a fodder crop. Known elsewhere in Afghanistan as <i>shokhal</i>
<i>jalob</i>	Trader, dealer, middleman. Often used pejoratively.
<i>jerib</i>	Measure of land area equal to 0.494 acre or roughly one-fifth of a hectare
<i>haram</i>	Prohibited by or in contradiction to Islam
<i>jihad</i>	Righteous struggle or holy war, usually referring to the 1979-92 war against the Soviet occupation.
<i>jihadi</i>	Commander or political leader who gained his strength during the jihad years (1979-92)
<i>kunjara</i>	Oil seed cake – from cotton seed, flax (linseed), sesame, sunflower seed, mustard. Used as animal feed.
<i>lalmi</i>	Rain-fed (i.e., land, crops). Also referred to as <i>daima</i> in parts of north.
<i>madrassa</i>	Religious school or training academy
<i>mujahidin</i>	Guerrillas who fought in the 1979-92 war against the Soviet occupation (literally, those who fight jihad, or holy war)
<i>nakhod</i>	Chickpea
<i>nan</i>	Bread, also food more generally
<i>nim kala</i>	Half-assed (literally, half-headed)
<i>patak</i>	Grass pea (fed to animals or eaten by humans in times of desperation). Also known as <i>kulul</i> .
<i>pow</i>	Unit of weight equal to 435 grams, or nearly one pound
<i>rishqa</i>	Alfalfa (fed to animals)
<i>salaam</i>	Method of loan or advance payment used to finance opium poppy cultivation
<i>sarai</i>	An enclosed compound used for storage, trade, or other commercial purpose
<i>ser</i>	Unit of weight, most commonly Kabul ser, equal to 7 kg (15.4 lbs) and Mazar ser, equal to 14 kg
<i>shaftal</i>	Clover (fed to animals)
<i>shakarak</i>	Aphids
<i>shir chay</i>	Milk tea
<i>shura</i>	Council
<i>toli</i>	Unit of weight equal to 18 grams
<i>toman</i>	Iranian currency
<i>ushr</i>	Payment made to local clergy (<i>mullah</i>) for their services
<i>wasita</i>	Personal relationship or connection, often used to obtain a favour or preferential access or treatment
<i>woleswal</i>	District administrator or governor; i.e., one who administers a <i>woleswali</i>
<i>woleswali</i>	Administrative division within a province
<i>Wolesi Jirga</i>	Lower house of Afghan parliament

Executive Summary

It is generally assumed that there will be significant increases in the level of opium poppy cultivation after the critical year 2014, when international military combat forces will withdraw and Afghanistan will select its next president. In 2012-13, at the national level, area cultivated increased for the third consecutive year, and total opium production rose significantly. With 410 hectares (ha) of opium poppy recorded in the province, for the first time since 2007 Balkh is no longer classified as “poppy-free,” while Badakhshan saw an increase of 23 percent in area cultivated, despite reported eradication of the largest area of any province.

Field research during May 2013 in two districts in Balkh (Chimtal, Balkh) and Badakhshan (Khash, Jurm) provinces produced the following findings:

- **Extent of cultivation/eradication:** In Balkh Province, cultivation of opium poppy remains concentrated in the insecure areas. The government’s eradication campaign in the province was more robust than in previous years, with reports that 80 ha were eradicated, although in some areas this might have occurred after initial harvest. The government’s information campaign was successful in disseminating the counter-narcotics message, but it is less clear how committed local elders are to the counter-narcotics agenda, and therefore how effective the campaign was in actually reducing cultivation.

In Badakhshan, cultivation of opium poppy remains dispersed throughout the province, although concentrated in around seven of the province’s 28 districts. While official numbers show that eradication increased significantly (57 percent) in 2012-13, it is difficult to reconcile these numbers with village-level respondents’ description of a very minimal and “half-hearted” eradication, which appears to have had little or no impact on farmers’ behaviour; virtually all surveyed households had increased or maintained the amount of opium poppy cultivated relative to the previous year. Respondents attributed these decisions to opium poppy’s high returns, the need to liquidate debt, lack of other cropping or non-farm options, and the tepid quality of anticipated eradication.

- **Security:** In some formerly insecure areas of Balkh, improved security, in part due to the Afghan Local Police (ALP), and upgraded roads have led to better market access and are associated with an expansion of cultivation of vegetables and other cash crops. Security has deteriorated in many areas of Badakhshan Province, especially in the key area of Warduj, although in Badakhshan’s fragmented political landscape it is difficult to attribute insecurity to one factor, rather than on local conflicts and competition and a mix of insurgents, local powerholders and criminals.
- **Importance of crop diversification and non-farm income:** Most households in Balkh Province who reported an improved economic situation attributed it to a combination of improved yields and prices from cash crops and non-farm employment. Some households reported purchasing productive capital assets with past returns from crops. However, low prices prevailing at harvest time, high cost of transport, market disruptions due to blockages of the Salang highway, and crop diseases and pests continue to limit farmers’ returns. Daily labourers in Mazar City reported a decline in wages and in demand for labour, which is consistent with the widely recognised contraction in the local and national economy, including the construction sector which has been an important source of employment.

The lack of other agricultural options in Badakhshan is due to climate, remote location and geography, and farmers cited lack of access to markets as a major constraint. Similar to Balkh, daily labourers in Faizabad and households in Khash and Jurm reported a decline in the availability of construction work, although there was some evidence that opium poppy cultivation was creating employment in weeding, harvesting and lancing.

Although findings should be generalised beyond the fieldwork areas only with care, especially in Badakhshan they suggest an absence of factors which would decrease cultivation of opium poppy in the longer term, with the possible exception of low opium prices—which at any rate will be transient.

The combination of forceful suppression and non-farm employment in the aid-driven economy (i.e. in the booming city of Mazar) may not be sustainable in the future. On the security side, coercion will be much harder to maintain in the unstable and/or contested political environment that is expected to prevail from 2014 onwards, when it is unlikely that the state or its representatives will wish to forcibly impose unpopular policies on unwilling and uncooperative communities, especially during an election year. The 24 percent national reduction in reported eradication in 2012-13 over the previous year and the Ministry of Counter Narcotics' flagging of the "weak cooperation" of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police may be indicators of a reduction in will. At the same time, suppression may continue in areas where it coincides with the political or other interests of powerful leaders. Areas where a level of security has been maintained through informal agreements and/or the deployment of ALP (e.g. Chimtāl) are especially vulnerable to instability due to the questionable and often fluid loyalties of local powerholders.

On the economic side, a contracting national economy deflated by a lack of the confidence needed for investment and consumption will further reduce non-farm employment opportunities for the rural unemployed and under-employed. Regardless of the ultimate status of the Afghan-US Bilateral Security Agreement, there will inevitably be a reduction in international financial flows, which will lead to reductions in the patronage funding which has shared the wealth and, in the view of some, "bought" a type of security. The search for sources of patronage to replace international funding may lead to criminality and competition over licit and semi-licit resources, as well as the pursuit of cultivation, production and trade in opiates. Moreover, insecurity leads to increased perceptions of market-related risk by farmers, which is likely to discourage the production of licit crops whose returns are dependent on the presence of security and reasonably smooth functioning of institutions and markets, and encourage the one crop which thrives in their absence. Finally, the "safety net" provided by migration to Iran and Pakistan, already less attractive due to political conditions and the reduced relative value of neighbours' currency, may become even less so in the event of serious conflict in Kabul or elsewhere, which is likely to cause the regional neighbours to strongly discourage migration.

While the current uncertain political and security environment appears to be an inhospitable one, nevertheless in some places there is evidence of increasing market linkages and capital accumulation with the income from cash crops or non-farm employment. To enable households in higher potential, more secure areas with access to markets and water to create livelihoods for themselves, institutional and biological impediments to licit market crops should be addressed so as to lower the risk to farmers, who even in the more secure higher potential areas are still at the mercy of crop diseases and pests, road conditions, intermittent security and external markets. Otherwise, the uncertainty of the coming period raises the risk that farmers opt for illicit crops which are not so dependent on market conditions at one point in time.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Purpose and rationale

For the third consecutive year, area cultivated with opium poppy in Afghanistan has increased. The 36 percent reported increase in 2012-13 follows the 18 percent increase between 2010-11 and 2011-12, and has produced what the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) calls a “sobering” record high level. While growing conditions differ greatly between areas, similar to last year when poor weather conditions and crop disease resulted in a drop in total production of 36 percent from 2010-11, crop disease in some of the most significant opium producing regions in the south has limited production. Still, UNODC estimates an 11 percent increase in yield nationwide and a 49 percent in total production.¹

The next growing season, 2013-14, also will coincide with the critical transition year of 2014, when the international community will finish its drawdown of combat forces and a presidential election will select Afghanistan’s next leader. The uncertainty of the 2014 Transition, and in particular its effects on Afghanistan’s illicit economy, is a matter of great concern to policy makers and officials, who fear the long-term destabilising effects of opium poppy cultivation and trade.² Already, eradication was down 24 percent in 2012-13 relative to the previous year; while UNODC and the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) partly attributed this to “warm weather conditions” which allowed a limited window for eradication,³ it may simply indicate a lack of appetite for the conflict which inevitably comes with eradication, especially in the more insecure areas. There was also a sharp increase in eradication-related security incidents. According to MCN, nationwide 143 people were killed and 89 injured during the 2012-13 eradication campaign, an unfortunate increase in deaths of 40 percent over the previous year.⁴

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit’s (AREU) current research has the following aims: 1) to provide an assessment of how well support to the wider political and economic environment underlies and facilitates expanded livelihood options for rural Afghans; 2) to provide an assessment of how changes to the wider enabling environment influences the decision to cultivate opium poppy or not; and 3) to identify policy recommendations about how efforts to create supportive environments sustaining opium poppy reduction can be improved.

1.1.2 Previous work and analysis⁵

Findings from AREU’s past research on the dynamics of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan have emphasised the following:

- The failure of policy and projects to place opium cultivation and trade in a broader social, economic and political context, while at the same time recognising that there are significant local differences in agro-ecological conditions and factor endowments (especially availability of water and the quality of land) which make a “one size fits all” policy ineffective and even counterproductive.
- The futility of coercive approaches to suppress cultivation driven by simplistic and short-term metrics of reduction, which can be counterproductive to stated policy goals and instead may impoverish and indebt individual households, lead to broader contractions in the local and regional economy, and alienate the population from the state.

1 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013: Summary Findings” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, November 2013).

2 See Emma Graham-Harrison, “Drug Trade Could Splinter Afghanistan into Fragmented Criminal State - UN,” *The Guardian*, 5 January 2014, or Rob Crilly and Ben Farmer, “American Watchdog Says Afghanistan Risks Becoming ‘Narco-State’,” *The Telegraph*, 15 January 2014.

3 UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013.”

4 Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Final Evaluation Report of Poppy Eradication/Verification: Lessons Learned During 2012-2013 (1391-1392)” (Kabul: MCN, 2013).

5 See bibliography for past AREU publications.

- The need for policy to take into consideration the multi-faceted role that opium poppy plays in the livelihoods of rural households, including the acquisition of land and credit, generation of cash income needed in addition to the wheat that provides food security and the store of value for the future.
- The important role of governance, including both formal and informal institutions, and security in enabling and ensuring access to markets, which allow households to move away from illicit livelihoods.
- The inadequacy of short-term (annual) fluctuations in area cultivated in predicting long-term sustainable reductions in the illicit economy.
- Lack of attention to the incentives created for those who wield political power to maintain the illicit economy.

In Balkh and Badakhshan provinces, previous research has identified the negative welfare outcomes and likely lack of sustainability of the suppression of cultivation from around 2007. In 2012, research in Balkh noted the province's tenuous hold on "poppy-free" status,⁶ the role of state presence in suppressing cultivation, the association of cultivation with insecurity, and the importance of labour opportunities in Mazar-e Sharif even for households living in rural areas. In Badakhshan, research noted opium poppy cultivation as a response to financial stress, a lack of a credible threat of eradication, high dependence on non-farm incomes and migration, and the lack of local political incentives to suppress the cultivation, production and trade of narcotics.

⁶ "Poppy-free" status is determined by UNODC's Annual Opium Poppy Survey. In 2011-12, the US government estimated that 640 ha were cultivated in Balkh, above the "poppy-free" threshold of 100 ha.

2. Methodology

2.1 Description of methodology

Research in 2013 employed the same methodology as the previous year in Balkh and Badakhshan, and which has been used since 2002 in other provinces such as Helmand and Nangarhar. Survey teams collected quantitative and qualitative household-level data in two districts in each province. Areas with a significant history of opium poppy cultivation were selected for fieldwork with the aid of geospatial mapping conducted by Alcis Ltd. Fieldwork by the teams was carried out in Balkh between 12-24 May and in Badakhshan between 26 May-7 June, with debriefings done in the respective provincial centres daily (Balkh) or at the end of the fieldwork period (Badakhshan). Within the constraints imposed by logistics and the unpredictability of the agricultural cycle, the teams attempted to conduct fieldwork as close as possible to the opium harvest so that respondents' recollections would be more accurate and visual verification could be done of crops in the field.

In Balkh, fieldwork was done in Chimtal as it was the previous year, but this year Balkh District was substituted for Char Bolak so as to have the contrast of a "high potential" area with the lower potential area of Chimtal. As expected, security considerations influenced the selection of fieldwork areas within the districts and in some cases limited the mobility of the research teams. In Balkh, in part due to the eradication campaign in process at that time, insecurity in the main opium poppy growing areas of Chimtal limited the ability of the team to conduct interviews there, so they instead visited adjacent areas. In Badakhshan, the teams were able to return to 12 of 14 of the villages in Khash and Jurm, which they had visited the previous year.

Quantitative household-level information was collected on: land owned, land farmed, land sharecropped or leased, area planted to each crop (winter and summer seasons), yields, crops sold and prices, household wheat consumption (and self-sufficiency), numbers and types of livestock owned and sold, sales and purchases of household assets, household composition, non-farm income and debt incurred. Qualitative household-level information included: type of irrigation, difficulties in obtaining access to land, perceptions of agricultural conditions, constraints on marketing of agricultural outputs (including opium), livelihoods-related migration, donor or government assistance, types of non-farm employment, perceptions of characteristics of local counter-narcotics initiatives and perceptions of changes in and sustainability of households' economic situations. Households were asked to provide the above information for both the 2011-12 and 2012-13 agricultural years, where relevant.

Household interviews were conducted informally, mostly in farmers' fields, with interview forms written up immediately after conclusion of the interview. This informal approach has been shown to reduce bias and reticence caused by formal interviews. To minimise respondents' suspicions and encourage truthful responses, fieldworkers did not pursue a direct line of questioning about sensitive topics such as illicit cultivation and trade, government corruption or local support for armed opposition groups (AOGs), but instead allowed respondents' views to emerge through an extended conversation.

After completion of the fieldwork, household-level information on crops grown, yields and prices was used to estimate farm incomes. Because the 2012-13 harvest had not been completed at the time of fieldwork, yields from 2011-12 were used to estimate this year's farm income.

In addition to the household-level interviews, interviews were held with shopkeepers and labourers in each of the four districts, and with government officials, aid officials, United Nations (UN) officials, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in each province.

Finally, the research drew on a variety of secondary sources, including previous AREU published work on the rural economy in Balkh and Badakhshan and donor, NGO and government reports and statistical compilations.

2.2 Caveats

As with any research in Afghanistan, a number of caveats are in order. First, as noted above, security concerns limited the team's ability to visit the main opium poppy growing areas of Chimal District. Second, findings are specific to the areas of fieldwork, and caution should therefore be exercised before generalising more broadly to other areas of the country or even the four districts. Third, the informal interview approach described above relies on the recall of respondents and fieldworkers, and therefore may be subject to imperfect recollection and a positive bias about the past. Fourth, despite the informal nature of the interviews and the indirect line of questioning, respondents may be wary about discussing sensitive topics and providing complete and truthful responses to individuals not well known in the area. This applies especially to interviews conducted in bazaar areas and other venues where onlookers might be present. Finally, respondents' stated opinions may embody personal biases, or more pragmatically may be an attempt to attract development assistance, especially where the discussion is about the extent and sufficiency of government assistance.

Despite these caveats, the use of a consistent methodology by an experienced field team with more than 15 years of experience is likely to achieve accuracy and security for the team, while addressing the sensitive topics covered by the research.

3. Opium Cultivation in 2012-13

3.1 National outlook, with regional/provincial trends

For the third consecutive year, the area cultivated with opium poppy in Afghanistan has increased.⁷ The 36 percent increase during the 2012-13 growing season follows the 18 percent increase between 2010-11 and 2011-12, and the 7 percent increase from 2009-10 to 2010-11. According to UNODC, there was an expansion of existing areas under cultivation as well as a resumption of cultivation in areas which were previously suppressed. Overall production of opium in 2012-13 was estimated to have increased by 49 percent, a figure which would have been significantly higher had key opium poppy growing areas in the western and southern regions not been affected by unfavourable weather conditions and plant disease.

The total number of Afghanistan's 34 provinces considered "poppy-free" in 2012-13 decreased from 17 to 15, with Balkh and Faryab provinces moving above the 100 ha threshold.⁸ The location of opium poppy cultivation remained mostly concentrated in the south and southwest, primarily Helmand, Kandahar and Farah, which, respectively, increased by 34 percent, increased by 16 percent and decreased by 12 percent. With 14 percent of national output, Kandahar has again replaced Farah as the second largest producing province, although still far behind Helmand's 48 percent. Although absolute levels of cultivation are lower than in Helmand, a huge expansion was reported in Nimroz (327 percent) and Nangarhar (399 percent). The latter's sharp increase is especially concerning given the province's importance as a gateway to Pakistan and the role of its traders in commerce and politics. That only 157 ha were eradicated in Nangarhar suggests deterioration in the security situation and perhaps an unwillingness of Afghan security forces to tread heavily in insecure areas.⁹

UNODC ascribed the increased area cultivated primarily to the high level of prices in 2012, along with the uncertainty associated with the 2014 Transition. During 2013, average prices decreased by 12 percent, perhaps due to the anticipated increase in production, which turned out to be 49 percent. UNODC also reported narrowing price differentials between regions, which could suggest a greater integration of regional markets. Despite the narrowing price differentials, significant differences exist between provinces and even between areas within one province.

3.2 Brief history of cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan¹⁰

3.2.1 Balkh

In 2012-13, farmers in Balkh were estimated to have cultivated 410 ha of opium poppy, thereby causing the province to lose the "poppy-free" status achieved first in 2007. Balkh had retained this status in 2011-12, although with some questions about exactly how "poppy-free" the province was. While "poppy-free" status is determined based upon UNODC's "Annual Opium Poppy Survey," the US government estimated that 640 ha were cultivated in Balkh in 2011-12, above the "poppy-free" threshold of 100 ha. Political sensitivity, the assumption of eradication responsibilities by the provincial authorities without the official involvement of MCN or UNODC, and the location of cultivation in insecure areas which are not subject to verification all make the extent of cultivation in Balkh somewhat opaque. In 2013, 80 ha were reported to have been eradicated in the province, all in Chimal District. The suppression of cultivation in 2007 occurred after major expansion of cultivation following the fall of the Taliban, which had in turn followed the expansion beginning in 1994 beyond the traditional local use among Turkmen and which

⁷ UNODC/MCN, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013."

⁸ According to UNODC and MCN's criterion, a province is considered "poppy-free" if identified cultivation is less than 100 ha.

⁹ Nangarhar was one of the provinces flagged by MCN as providing "weak cooperation" to the eradication teams. See MCN, "Final Evaluation Report." For discussion of the evolving situation in Nangarhar, see also David Mansfield, "All Bets are Off! Prospects for (B)reaching Agreements and Drug Control in Helmand and Nangarhar in the Run Up to Transition" (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

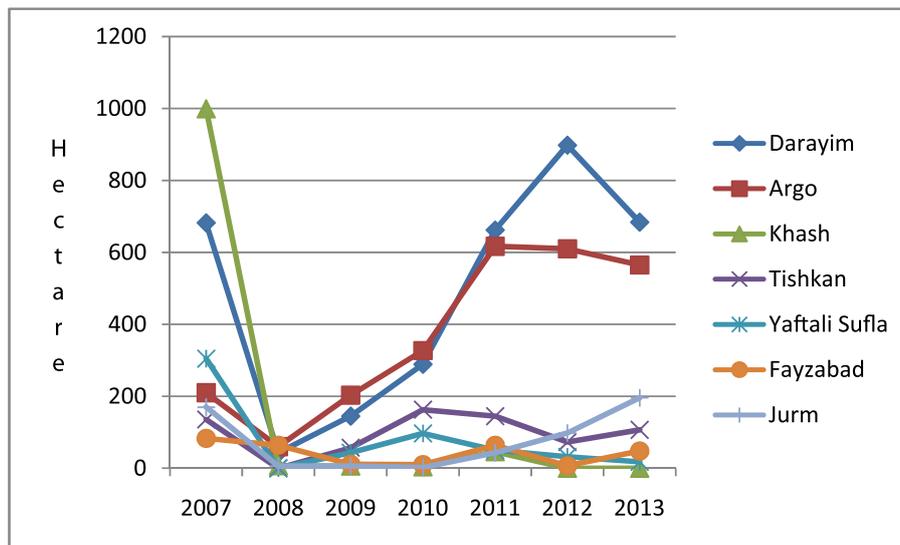
¹⁰ For more information on the history of cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan and the situation in 2012, see Paul Fishstein, "A Little Bit Poppy-free and a Little Bit Eradicated: Opium Poppy Cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2011-12" (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

continued under the Taliban. Cultivation in Balkh continues to be geographically associated with insecurity and limited state presence, and therefore is largely concentrated in the two relatively insecure districts of Char Bolak and Chimtal, which, along with Balkh District, were the centres of cultivation even prior to 2007.

3.2.2 Badakhshan

In 2012-13, opium poppy cultivation in Badakhshan again ticked upward, with an increase of 23 percent following the previous year's increase of 13 percent, which had put the province in the category of "moderate" rather than "low" producer. The current increase came after the reported eradication of more area than any other province in 2012-13, including Helmand, and several years after the province came close to zero production in 2008, which had followed sharp increases post-2001, including peak production of 15,067 ha in 2004 and Badakhshan's providing 11-16 percent of national output between 2002 and 2004. As the province was the only one not to come under Taliban control, it was unaffected by the 2000-01 national ban, and therefore provided 79 percent of national output—a statistical anomaly. Historically, opium was produced in the province for local use; in isolated areas it was often the only available medicine, and addiction is high in certain areas such as Wakhan and Shegnan. During the *jihad*, *mujahidin*, and Taliban resistance periods, the production of and trade in opiates provided a consistent source of income for local commanders and political leaders. Badakhshan's isolated location and proximity to the Tajikistan border has also created opportunities for trafficking of opiates, along with weapons and other illicit and semi-licit goods. Unlike Balkh, where opium poppy is concentrated in two districts, in Badakhshan cultivation is widely dispersed throughout the province (Afghanistan's fifth largest), often with great year to year district-wise fluctuations in countervailing directions. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Opium poppy cultivation by district in Badakhshan, 2007-13



Source: UNODC/MCN, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013." Includes only districts which are major producers or of interest to this study. Because of the change in district boundaries in Badakhshan between 2006 and 2007, figures before 2007 are not comparable.

3.3 Policy and programme issues looking forward

All evidence suggests that opium poppy cultivation will continue to rise in the next several years due to the following political and economic realities:

- Preoccupation of the international community and the Afghan government with more pressing issues such as presidential elections and the effects of the security transition, which make it less likely that political leaders and officials will want to push for unpopular positions that will create enmity and conflict.
- Reduction in the security presence of international and Afghan forces and their reluctance to focus on suppressing opium poppy cultivation, which will make the maintenance of coercive approaches impossible to sustain.
- Curtailment of international aid and other financial flows, which will reduce the amount of patronage funding available at local levels, and in turn force powerholders, including local irregular security forces, to look elsewhere for financial resources to sustain their followers—especially critical in an environment where territorial and economic control will be put into play.
- Contraction of a national economy which has been largely dependent on international spending, which will increase pressure to relax prohibitions on illicit sources of income, especially in areas (e.g. Badakhshan, Nangarhar, Balkh) which had previously benefitted from the direct and indirect (multiplier) effects of opium poppy cultivation and trade.
- New agricultural technologies such as chemicals and solar panels which lower the costs of production and allow formerly marginal land to be brought under cultivation.

The overarching policy and programme issues are therefore how to make sustainable progress in the drive to reduce and ultimately eliminate opium poppy cultivation when many of the assets and incentives that have been present for the last decade are reduced or even absent. The flip side is how, in a policy situation which is seen to be increasingly desperate, to avoid rash and potentially counter-productive policy and programme responses.¹¹

¹¹ For discussion of the possible effects of the 2014 Transition on the opium economy, see David Mansfield and Paul Fishstein, “Eyes Wide Shut: Counter-Narcotics in Transition” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

4. Balkh Province

4.1 Balkh Province background¹²

Balkh Province lies in a strategic location in northern Afghanistan, with the Central Asian nations of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north, and the province of Kunduz to the east, Samangan to the south and east, Jawzjan to the west, and Sar-e Pul to the south and west. With a population of 1.2 million persons, Balkh is Afghanistan's fourth largest province, and with a population of 357,000, the provincial centre, Mazar-e Sharif, is the country's fourth largest city.¹³ Mazar is a key regional political and economic node which has historically served as the de facto centre of northern Afghanistan. Due to its location as a gateway to Central Asia, Mazar has functioned as a major trading centre, including during the 1980s and 1990s, when despite the open conflict taking place in Kabul and other cities, it was relatively peaceful and stable. Since 2001, Mazar has thrived, ascribed largely to its relative security and efficient, "business-friendly" administration.

Balkh is administratively divided into 14 *woleswalis* (districts), which contain five municipalities, and one special district of Hairatan on the Uzbekistan border. The regional command for the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) and the Afghanistan National Police (ANP) are located in Mazar, as is that of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Mazar has also historically been the regional administrative centre for the UN. The German-led ISAF base at Camp Marmal, adjacent to the Mazar airport, has increased in significance as international military forces have consolidated there as NATO has shut down other northern bases. Should international forces remain in Afghanistan in a training and support capacity after 2014, it is anticipated that Camp Marmal will serve as the northern base. Camp Marmal has also been the main node for the "retrograde" of NATO equipment to Uzbekistan and points west through the Afghan border town of Hairatan. Even before gaining additional economic and political significance as the chief crossing point for NATO's "northern supply route" in 2011-12 in response to Pakistan's temporary closing of its borders to NATO traffic, Hairatan was the entry point for nearly half of Afghanistan's inbound trade. Hairatan is also the border terminus for Afghanistan's first significant railway, which runs 75 km between the border and the Mazar airport.¹⁴

Thirty-six percent of Balkh's population lives in urban areas, the majority (82 percent) in Mazar, with the rest in the towns of Balkh, Dawlatabad, Sholgara and Khulm. Balkh is ethnically heterogeneous, with Tajiks making up the largest group, followed by Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen and Arabs.¹⁵ The varied ethnic populations of Balkh are a mix of indigenous to the area and transplanted over more than a century from elsewhere in Afghanistan and from the former Soviet Union. While urban areas are somewhat mixed, rural settlements tend to be organised along ethnic lines.

Balkh's agricultural economy is based mainly on wheat, fruit, vegetables and nuts. Balkh has the second largest area devoted to wheat of any province, and is a leading producer of almonds and pomegranates. The significant amounts of cotton produced historically have been largely eliminated by a combination of conflict and sustained drought, although there are some indications that output has recently been increasing. Prior to 2007 when Balkh became "poppy-free," opium poppy cultivation was considered a significant part of the agricultural economy, with linkages to other sectors such as trade, finance, real estate and construction.

¹² For more extensive provincial background, see Fishstein, "A Little Bit Poppy-free."

¹³ Central Statistics Organization, "Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2012/13" (Kabul: CSO, April 2012).

¹⁴ Technically, Afghanistan's first railway was a 7 km line built during the reign of Amanullah Khan (1919-29) between the center of Kabul and Darulaman on the southwestern edge of the city. See Andrew Grantham, "Railways of Afghanistan," <http://www.andrewgrantham.co.uk/afghanistan/> (accessed 1 February 2014).

¹⁵ "Arab" refers to groups that claim descent from the Arabs who brought Islam to Afghanistan starting in the seventh century. They have been assimilated, and speak Dari and/or, in parts of the north, Uzbeki.

Due to its relative stability and “business-friendly” environment, and the national policy of the market economy, Mazar has thrived, with its economy growing at 20 percent per year according to some estimates, nearly twice the national average of 11 percent.¹⁶ It is likely that this growth has contributed to Balkh Province having the fourth best (of 33 reporting provinces) rate of persons who are gainfully employed, according to the draft 2011-12 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA).¹⁷ Key sectors include fuel and general trade, transport, construction and other services. Construction in particular has been an important source of demand for labour for workers from rural areas of the province and beyond. The construction boom is readily apparent in the physical footprint of the city, which now extends east along the Kabul highway towards the Naibabad junction and the turn-off to Hairatan (and Uzbekistan). Many of the important pre-war industrial developments built or supported by the Soviets, including the Kod-e Barq fertiliser and power generation plant, Balkh Textiles, Balkh Cotton and Vegetable Oil, and the Mazar Silo, have become degraded or inactive, although some smaller-scale manufacturing has been induced, partly by the construction sector.

Similar to elsewhere in Afghanistan, there is significant overlap between the business community, parliamentarians and provincial council members, as well as between businessmen and strongmen—many of whom are one and the same. There is some evidence that traders and businessmen have moved to Mazar from Helmand, Kandahar, Herat and elsewhere to avoid general insecurity and kidnapping by criminal gangs.

4.1.1 Economy in spring 2013¹⁸

Although Balkh’s economy has thrived in recent years, in the spring of 2013 the general outlook was guarded if not pessimistic. Although there are no hard provincial-level statistics, the economy was widely seen to have contracted due to uncertainty related to the 2014 Transition and presidential election. This was consistent with revised national-level projections of a slowdown in economic growth to 3.1 percent in 2013 after more than a decade in which annual growth averaged 9.4 percent.¹⁹ While the measured national slowdown was largely the result of mediocre agricultural performance in 2013, non-agricultural growth (e.g. services, construction) was anticipated to be below the level of the previous years. In Balkh, the most significant indicator was a sharp fall in the price of land in Mazar, estimated at 30-60 percent. For example, plots at the Khalid bin Walid development which had been selling for US\$15,000 were now on the market for \$8,000. Similarly, in Azadi Township plots which had been selling for \$2,500 were now \$900. Due to uncertainty, households which a few years ago might have built new houses may now prefer to rent and thereby not have cash and other liquid assets tied up in real estate. The fall in housing and land prices has also harmed those who had purchased land as an investment but are now unable to sell for even what they had originally paid, as potential buyers continue to hold out for anticipated lower prices. Another indicator was the fall in prices for private vehicles. Investment was said to be “on hold,” and there was a general sense of increased caution in household spending.

The construction sector, which along with the fuel and general trade, transport, and land sectors, had been an important driver of the economy, was now reported to be in the doldrums. Informal estimates were of a 50 percent decline since 2010. As discussed below, labourers reported less work for casual and semi-skilled workers, which was reflected in lower wages. Another source of downward pressure on the labour market has been the growth of new informal settlements (around 20 by some accounts) on the outskirts of the city due to internal displacement from conflict and natural disasters as well as economic migration.

16 Balkh Provincial Development Council, “Balkh Economic Profile: A Compilation of Information on Local Economy in the Balkh Province” (Private Sector Development Sectoral Committee, June 2010).

17 Central Statistics Organization, “Draft National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, 2011-2012” (Kabul: CSO, January 2014). The 2011-12 NRVA uses a new definition of unemployment considered more relevant to Afghanistan, the percentage of the labour force that is not gainfully employed. This definition captures both the unemployed and the underemployed.

18 For a more extensive discussion of Balkh’s economy, see Paul Fishstein, “Balkh’s Economy in Transition” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

19 World Bank, “Afghanistan Economic Update” (Kabul: World Bank, October 2013).

As reported in 2012, Iran continues to be a less attractive destination for youth and other economic migrants due to increasing restrictions and conditions on Afghans, devaluation of the Iranian currency by roughly one-third since January 2009 due primarily to western sanctions, and widespread perceptions that Afghans return either addicted or armed. Instead, many young men were said to be enrolling in the ANA or ANP.

Finally, the devaluation of the Afghani by 22 percent against the US dollar between October 2010 and May 2013 has also increased the effective prices of consumer and household goods, many of which are imported.

4.1.2 Politics and security in spring 2013

Especially since 2004, when a long festering and destabilising power struggle was resolved through the appointment of Atta Mohammad Noor as governor, Balkh Province has been relatively peaceful, with the exception of pockets of instability in Char Bolak, Chimtal, Dawlatabad and Sholgara. Due to its security, Mazar City was in the first tranche of the security transition in July 2011, with the rest of the province following in the second tranche in November. According to some sources, Balkh has become somewhat less secure since 2008 and 2009, although some of the incidents were said to be factional or related to the 2009 elections, rather than being related to the insurgency. According to the International NGO Safety Office-Afghanistan, total incidents increased by nearly half in 2010, increased again by 13 percent in 2011, then decreased by nearly one-quarter in 2012. The most significant incident was the April 2011 attack on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) office in Mazar in which seven UN personnel were killed. As of mid-2013, incidents were roughly one-third higher than half of the total for 2012. Relative to the previous year, there seemed to be greater willingness to criticise the government and the provincial administration, perhaps because the provision of security is no longer enough to meet the population's expectations, or because of 2014-related anxiety about being left behind while those who were better off had formulated their exit strategy. Security conditions in the fieldwork areas are discussed below.

4.2 Balkh Province fieldwork areas: Chimtal and Balkh districts

Fieldwork was conducted in the two adjoining districts of Chimtal and Balkh. (See Map 1.) Fieldwork in 2012 was done in Char Bolak and Chimtal, but in 2012-13 was conducted in Balkh rather than Char Bolak for the purpose of contrasting a "high potential" area with the lower potential area of Chimtal. Since province-wide suppression in 2007, opium poppy cultivation has been largely centred in Char Bolak and Chimtal, with occasional reports of presence in parts of Balkh and on the east bank of the river in Sholgara.

Chimtal is situated to the west and southwest of Mazar, with the district centre located 40 km from the provincial centre. The district's main agricultural areas lie in a narrow band bordered to the north by Char Bolak. The district is accessed by a paved road from Dehdadi to the east, along which security is considered good, and by a second unpaved one from Balkh to the northeast, which is less secure. Chimtal's population of around 87,600 is settled in 171 villages.²⁰ The district is ethnically mixed, with settlements largely along ethnic lines. Estimates are approximately 45 percent Tajik and Arab, 24 percent Pashtun, 25 percent Hazara, and 5 percent Turkmen. Chimtal is a Grade 3 *woleswali*.²¹

Farmers irrigate most or all of their available land during the winter growing season, while due to scarcity of water only 40-60 percent is irrigated in summer. This is especially the case in areas where opium poppy is grown, and is often given as a reason for growing what is a hardier crop. Land is irrigated mainly by canals, and when water is scarce, especially in the far reaches of the district, by tubewells. It is estimated that 80 percent of irrigation water in the district comes from the Nahr-e Imam Bokhari canal, which is used for drinking water by roughly two-thirds of households, with the rest using wells.

²⁰ Central Statistics Organization, "Population Estimation 2011-12." <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/6070> (accessed 26 October 2012). Number of villages from Balkh Provincial Development Plan.

²¹ Provinces and districts are categorised from grade 1 (highest) to grade 3 (lowest) based largely on population, but influenced also by political factors. Grade of the province or district will affect the allocation of resources, including the size and grades of the governor and *woleswal*'s office staff.

Respondents in Chimtal reported an increase in development activities compared with two years ago, but that due to insecurity there were still no projects west of Jar Qalah. Although on a much smaller scale than in other areas of the country, US Agency for International Development (USAID) focused small projects in Chimtal, Char Bolak and Balkh for stabilisation purposes. Some of these projects were in the form of cash paid to communities to do work. As in 2012, respondents complained about the diversion of inputs by well-connected individuals.

Balkh District is situated on the main road between Mazar and Shiberghan (and Maimana), 20 km west of Mazar. Balkh's population is also ethnically mixed, with estimates of 50 percent Pashtun, 23 percent Tajik, 15 percent Arab, 10 percent Hazara and 2 percent Uzbek. The district contains a number of significant historical and religious sites, including the remains of the ancient city and the shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa, which is located in the district centre.

Irrigation in the district is provided mostly (80 percent, by some estimates) by canals until June when water becomes scarcer, after which tubewells are used. In the summer growing season, an estimated 60 percent of land is irrigated from canals and 40 percent from tubewells. With recent increases in the price of fuel, farmers have reported not being able to irrigate their land with generator and tubewell. Approximately one-third of the land is generally not sown during the summer because of water scarcity, a more favourable proportion than in Chimtal. Drinking water is obtained largely through handpumps (60 percent) installed mostly by NGOs, with the rest through open wells and canals. Some households use canals where local well water has a high sulphur content.

Important crops in both districts are wheat (sown to roughly half of the cultivated land), barley, maize, cotton, sesame and flax. Important vegetables include onion, potato, okra, eggplant, cucumber and increasingly squash (marrow). Fruits include watermelon, melon, tomato, apricot, almonds, grapes, peach and mulberry, the latter primarily for consumption in the area. Both districts grow pomegranate, although Balkh's have historically been larger and better-known and therefore more common in the market beyond the area. Pulses include chickpea (*nakhod*) and mung bean. In addition, in Chimtal farmers grow poppy, *chars* (hashish), and cumin. Balkh and Char Bolak have also historically been well-known for the quality of their *chars*. In Balkh, there is a significant amount of animal husbandry and dairy activity.

Within most of the fieldwork areas, security is reported to have improved in the last two years, especially in Chimtal, despite the increasing insecurity in the surrounding provinces, Shiberghan Road, and other areas west of Mazar. Still, due to a combination of security and lack of office space, government officials, including the *woleswal*, were said not to be going to their posts every day, but mainly only on bazaar days. In Chimtal, the improvement that has taken place was attributed to the formation of the 100-strong Afghan Local Police (ALP) and to the greater government presence which has been allowed due to the control of the ALP. In some areas satisfaction with the ALP comes partly from the employment of local men, which brings in an income of 7,000 Afs per month for those who stay in their own homes and 9,000 Afs for those who are based at a post. Still, respondents were concerned about the role that the ALP are playing at present ("one eye to the government and one eye to the people"²²) or will play in the future, in particular what would happen in 2014 and the longer term, because so many weapons had been distributed.²³ Some who expressed a more optimistic outlook about the future said that because the Taliban, ALP, and ANP were all Afghans, perhaps conditions would be better.

In Chimtal, people were generally quite critical of the government, saying that "the government doesn't work for us." This was especially the case in Jar Qalah, while elsewhere in the district people were somewhat more content because the government was seen to have built roads

22 One Afghan aid official said that "the ALP in Char Bolak are with the Afghan government during the day and at night they are going back to the local Taliban."

23 According to one analysis of the situation in Balkh, "ISAF, ANSF and local media all agreed that the threat to the security of the province comes as much from the factional rivalries among political parties and local strongmen, as it does from the Taleban. Illegal armed groups of various shapes and form far outnumber the Taleban, and these groups are used by rivals in local power struggles." Fabrizio Foschini, "The Enteqal Seven (7): Opportunities and Concerns in the North," *Afghan Analysts Network*, July 2011, 3.

that allow them to take their agricultural production to market in Mazar. Development work has always been limited in Chintal due to security, but people reported that it had grown even less, and that no government agencies go west of Jar Qalah. Respondents made the usual complaints about well-connected individuals skimming fertiliser, seed and anything else valuable provided by development agencies.

In Balkh District, the security situation was considered good. In 2012 there had been problems in some areas, but as in Chintal the introduction of the ALP was credited with improving the situation. Still, as in Chintal, there were concerns about the long-term trajectory of the ALP, and people reported a better view of the ANP than the ALP. Respondents were generally not as critical of the government as in Chintal, although they complained about corruption and that the government had not done much. Development work was said to be growing less with each year, and there were the usual complaints about rake-offs and diversion of seed and fertiliser, including by the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (DAIL).

In the fieldwork areas of both districts, most people give *ushr* to poor people or students at the local *madrassa*, but not to the Taliban, with the exception of Jar Qalah, where households were said to have paid *ushr* to the Taliban in 2012. However, respondents said that people in the remote areas of Chintal, Char Bolak, Balkh and Dawlatabad were paying *ushr* to the Taliban at harvest time, as otherwise they would not be permitted to transport their output to Mazar. In the fieldwork areas, *ushr* was typically two *ser* (one Kabul *ser* = 7 kg) wheat, 100 Afs, and the skin of a sacrificed animal. No other taxes were reported to be collected.²⁴

During the field team's visit, the eradication campaign was in process in Chintal, having started around 9 May. The campaign, which was planned for three phases, was considered more serious and sustained this year, with eradicators using 10-12 tractors which they had requested from DAIL rather than sticks to destroy the plants. At the time of fieldwork, one person was said to have been killed and one injured, and 20 anti-personnel mines had been found on the edges of fields.²⁵ This year's campaign involved ALP, Afghan Border Police, and the ANP, who set up a base in the area.²⁶ There were reports that a campaign had been held in some of the same places during the time of winter planting, but that it had not been very extensive. Despite the apparent greater seriousness of the eradication campaign, in which UNODC/MCN ultimately reported that 410 ha had been eradicated in Balkh Province, there are questions about the location and timing of the eradication. Some respondents claimed that at the time of eradication as much as 50-60 percent of the opium capsules' output had already been harvested, and that lancing was simultaneously going on in fields a short distance from the eradication sites.

Respondents' statements indicated that the counter-narcotics message is definitely getting out, but that there are questions about the extent of commitment of elders to the suppression agenda. It can safely be said that their commitment is mixed, depending on the area and presumably their relationships with officials and the community. Some reported that the elders had hid themselves during the campaign or had lied to provincial authorities about their role. As one respondent noted, "the heads of the *shura* talk, but they themselves are involved in cultivating poppy."²⁷ Others described elders who were more engaged: "The head of the *shura* supports the government and doesn't allow people to grow poppy or *chars*. Last summer I grew 10-20 plants but an elder came and told me to destroy it or he would turn me in to the police, who would have come and demanded money."²⁸ *Chars* did not appear to be strongly featured in the information campaign.

24 *Ushr* is traditionally an agricultural tithes paid to the mullah for his services to the community. More recently the term has come to be used generically (and incorrectly) to refer to any kind of taxation. There is a lot of confusion about payments to Taliban and others who claim religious sanction, including its nature (*ushr* vs. other types of payment), the amount (fixed percentage vs. variable), and the extent to which it is "offered" under duress. See David Mansfield, "Briefing Paper 7: 'Taxation' in Central Helmand and Kandahar" (Kabul: Alcis, March 2013).

25 These reports from respondents are at odds with the UNODC/MCN account, which states that there were no security incidents in Balkh. See UNODC/MCN, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013."

26 At least one ANSF personnel posted pictures from the in-process eradication campaign on his Facebook page.

27 Interview with farmer, Chintal District.

28 Interview with farmer, Balkh District.

As reported in 2012, there are also questions about the role of the ALP and their interactions with farmers. Their role in eradication (and cultivation) is ambiguous and complicated. There were reports of payments of 1,000 Afs per *jerib* for any fields left un-eradicated. The observation of one observer in 2012 remains true—that “counter-narcotics is not in their job descriptions.” An official in Mazar noted that the day after the start of an earlier phase of eradication when the governor was away, farmers showed up in Mazar to complain that the eradication forces took money and that there had been favouritism in the targeting of fields.

An increase in the area cultivated to opium poppy was expected this year, especially west of Jar Qalah, as it is far from the district centre, is a base for Taliban elements and does not receive much attention from the government. Officials claimed that some people are taking advantage of the uncertainty about the transition year of 2014 and are planting. There were also expectations of higher yields due to good growing conditions and the lack of hail that affected the crop last year, which had resulted in higher water content and therefore lower prices on the market. Prices for dry opium at the farm gate were reported to be around 3,000 Afs per *paw* (one Kabul *paw* = 435 grams) as compared with 2,000 Afs last year.²⁹

Chars is grown during the summer mainly in Char Bolak, Chimtal, Sholgara and Balkh districts. In Balkh District, it is grown primarily for personal use within compounds but generally not on a larger scale for market. At the time of the fieldwork it was too early to see any evidence in the ground, and with opium poppy eradication going on, it seemed a bad time to ask about cultivation of another illicit crop. As noted above, respondents noted that a prohibition of cultivation of *chars* was not mentioned in the information campaign, and that there had been no eradication of *chars* in 2012.

In both districts as in the province as a whole, agriculture in 2012-13 was generally good—better than in 2011-12, which was in turn much better than the drought year of 2010-11, which badly affected the rainfed areas of the province. In particular, the production of vegetables has increased, especially carrots, onions and okra, the latter of which has been greatly expanded over the last 3-4 years. Vegetables from Mazar and Kunduz bring a higher price at harvest because the varieties are seen as superior and, more importantly, because they are picked earlier than in some other areas. In recent years, squash has been increasingly found to be profitable. Farmers claimed that fertilising vegetable land also has benefits for subsequent plantings of wheat. Mung bean cultivation has expanded in the last several years, largely because it requires less water and the beans ripen more quickly. As is the case elsewhere in the country, cucumbers and other crops are increasingly being grown under poly-tunnels during the colder weather.

Farmers were generally positive about having better access to markets due to upgraded roads, improved security and the introduction of the low-cost Zaranj,³⁰ which has cut transport costs and increased flexibility. Much produce from Chimtal and Balkh comes to Mazar via Zaranj, although being a town with a larger market, produce from Balkh may come more on larger vehicles. People also use the Zaranj to earn money transporting people and goods, and so it is seen as an investment. Farmers in Chimtal, however, complained about the high cost of transporting their outputs to market.

While agriculture was in a generally good condition in 2012-13, there were a few exceptions to the positive news. Much fruit and nuts, especially apples, peaches and almonds, were hurt by lingering cold and a late snow at the blossom stage, except in higher altitude areas where blossoms had not yet come out. Losses for affected crops were put at 30 percent according to some informal estimates. For some dried fruits such as almonds, raisins, and apricots, prices went from 300 to 1,000 Afs per kg virtually overnight, as traders anticipated that the damage would sharply reduce availability for the coming year.³¹

29 These prices were reported locally and were dependent on highly localised conditions. UNODC reported declining prices for Balkh, with May 2013 approximately 20 percent below May 2012.

30 Zaranj is a type of motorbike which can be fitted with a variety of bodies and trailers to transport people and goods.

31 Interview with DAIL representative, Mazar.

The cultivation of both melon and watermelon was down due to pests and diseases which afflicted the crop in 2012. The melon fly has badly hurt output in both Chimtal and Balkh,³² and in Chimtal has led to a switch to watermelon or to cultivation of smaller fields. Similarly, in Balkh district watermelon aphids have badly harmed the watermelon output and discouraged cultivation, as all of the methods for prevention are either labour intensive and/or expensive. Additional crop pests include sesame aphids, which discouraged cultivation in 2013, and the potato worm, which is considered a new and significant problem. According to officials at Balkh Province DAIL, in some areas 90-95 percent of potato plants have been damaged by the worms, which attack leaves, roots and the fruit itself. Finally, Chimtal and Balkh were not affected by the historic floods which struck other parts of the province (Mazar, Nahr-e Shahi, Sholgara, Charkent and Kishindih) during April.³³

4.3 Analysis of households in fieldwork areas

While caution should be exercised when looking at absolute levels of estimated income (Table 1), figures suggest that surveyed households in Chimtal improved their relative situation over last year; estimated on-farm incomes of three-quarters of Chimtal households increased in 2012-13, while in Balkh more than three-quarters decreased. This may be explained most easily by the total amount of land sown by surveyed households, increasing by 16 percent in Chimtal and decreasing by 10 percent in Balkh. Such variation was largely the result of changes in the amount of sharecropped or leased land that households were able to access. A number of households reported that they had been unable to find land to farm either last year or this year. Others reported that they had been able to obtain additional land this year, either through fortuitous circumstances or through their own efforts. This may be idiosyncratic to the households, and is not likely to be significant on a district level.

Table 1: Household income profiles in fieldwork areas, Balkh (US\$)

	2011-12	2012-13							
	Avg on-farm income	Avg on-farm income	Avg non-farm income	Avg HH income	Avg HH size	Avg Income per-capita	Avg Income per-capita per day	Percent of income on-farm	Percent of income non-farm
Chimtal	\$7,188	\$9,537	\$854	\$10,591	14	\$834	\$2.29	90%	10%
Balkh	\$9,164	\$7,802	\$658	\$8,729	9	\$1,061	\$2.91	89%	11%

Table notes: See caveats on estimates of farm incomes in the methodology section. Information was not collected on 2011-12 non-farm income, so it is not possible to compare total household income.

Table 2: Breakdown of number of households by income per person per day, 2012-13, Balkh

Income per person per day	Chimtal	Balkh
Less than US\$1	2	1
\$1-2	4	7
\$2-5	8	5
More than \$5	1	2

With an average estimated income per capita per day of \$2.20 (Chimtal) or \$2.83 (Balkh) as shown in Table 1, a number of households can be assumed to meet their basic requirements only with difficulty or not at all. As shown in Table 2, roughly half of the 30 surveyed households bring in less than \$2 per person per day. As a very rough comparison, the average per-capita incomes were above the national average poverty line of \$0.75 per person per day used by the 2007-08 NRVA,³⁴ with one household in each district below the poverty line.

32 The Baluchistan melon fly (*Myiopardalis pardalina*) has become a serious and worsening problem in northern Afghanistan as well as in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. See J. Stonehouse, S.M. Sadeed, A. Harvey, and G.S. Haiderzada, "Myiopardalis Pardalina in Afghanistan," *Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium on Fruit Flies of Economic Importance*, 10-15 September 2006.

33 According to DAIL reports, in addition to 15 people who were killed, nearly 11,000 ha of agricultural land was destroyed and approximately 6,500 animals killed. In Mazar alone about 2,000 houses were damaged fully or partially. The significant damage east of Mazar was attributed to landowners' construction of petrol stations, *sarais* and other commercial buildings along the highway without regard for the existing culverts which had been built to divert flood water into the desert out of harm's way.

34 Central Statistics Organization, "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8: A Profile of Afghanistan" (Kabul: CSO, October 2009).

Although surveyed households changed the amount of land they cultivated, calculated average revenue per *jerib* was essentially constant in both Chimtal (\$364/367) and Balkh (\$306/313). There were, however, changes in household cropping decisions due to a variety of factors internal and external to the household. Of the 11 households in the two districts who reported a significant positive change in their economic situation from 2011-12 to 2012-13, all but one attributed the change primarily to the improved yields and prices they had received from growing cash crops, mainly vegetables and cotton. About half of these households also credited part of the positive change to non-farm employment by members of their household; in several cases, the non-farm employment came from renting out either a tractor or Zaranj that had been purchased with the income generated by previous years' sales of agricultural outputs.

Of the six households who reported a significant negative change in their situation, four attributed the change primarily to a shock (e.g. wedding, sickness of household member, legal case) which required them to borrow money, one to the watermelon disease, and one to the eradication of four *jeribs* of opium poppy. (In the latter case, it is possible that he had already done three rounds of collection.) Whether households' situations had improved or declined overall, most mentioned watermelon and other crop diseases, as well as marketing problems such as road blockages, the high cost of transport, and the depressed prices at harvest time as factors which had negative effects on their incomes. Not surprisingly, most households complained about high prices for food and consumer goods and said that in many cases this had negated any income gains. (Most respondents cited the "good" [high] prices for vegetables and other outputs as positive motivation for their cropping choices, but only one respondent explicitly acknowledged the basic economic fact that high prices had both advantages and disadvantages depending on whether one was a producer or consumer.) As noted above, the devaluation of the Afghani against the US dollar has increased the effective prices of imported goods, including food products such as wheat flour.

While virtually all farmers said that there were no major constraints on selling their outputs, especially in Chimtal many farmers complained about the low prices they received at harvest and about the lack of cold storage facilities which would allow them to store their produce for sale when prices had risen.³⁵ At least two cold storage facilities have been built by the private sector in Mazar, which either purchase outputs at harvest time or else essentially rent space to cooperatives or farmers who store outputs and take them out when prices are more favourable (higher) later in the year. However, these facilities are located on the east side of Mazar, close to the airport, and are largely unknown or impractical for farmers in the districts to the west. DAAIL is building a new 5,000 metric tonnes facility near the Mazar Silo.

Relatedly, Chimtal farmers also complained about the high price of transport, especially if they wanted to take advantage of the higher prices in larger markets. As one farmer noted: "The market is far. If I am selling in the village, people will purchase only on credit. Last year road transport was 55 Afs but now it is 70. They demand 50 Afs just for taking one bag of flour to market." The costs of marketing produce through other channels were said to be prohibitive. According to one farmer, "the price for tomatoes was low at harvest time. I sold them loose in the market. If I had crated them, I would have gotten a much higher price, but that has costs for the crates, labour and other things. There is lots of output at harvest time, so the prices come down." On the other hand, only two farmers in Balkh District complained about the high cost of transport, perhaps because traders come to the villages and purchase there.

While the majority of households grew the staple wheat, the percentage of total land sown to wheat increased by about 10 points among the surveyed households in Balkh. Three households shifted land into wheat production due to a combination of watermelon crop failure and difficulties they had faced in getting their other outputs to market as a result of road blockages and other market constraints. One farmer in Balkh, who increased the amount of wheat by 10 *jeribs* and reduced the amount of watermelon by 5 *jeribs* noted:

³⁵ A recurrent complaint is that Pakistani traders purchase potatoes, onions, cucumbers and other crops at low prices at harvest, transport them to storage facilities in Pakistan, then bring them back for sale when prices are higher. However, especially for low-value crops but also more generally, the economics of doing so do not appear to make sense, so this may be an urban legend.

Two years ago I sowed 2.5 jeribs carrots and got a good result, so I increased to 15 jeribs last year. They were good carrots but there was lots of other supply, including Pakistani and Tajik carrots, which drove down the market price. I was able to sell only at a low price. This year I am not growing at all. I am also not growing melons, as last year they got dried out due to aphids (shakararak) and worms, but the main reason is that the road to Kabul was blocked due to construction and so the price came down and I had to sell in Shiberghan at a low price.³⁶

The second farmer shifted a *jerib* of land from watermelon to wheat, explaining:

I got a bad result from watermelon because the Salang was closed and so I couldn't send the outputs to a good market. The outputs were very high when the demand was low, so the prices came down. Due to this, I wanted to increase the amount of wheat this year.³⁷

The third household which shifted almost all of its land into wheat did so because members had been involved in a land dispute which took up all of their time and therefore did not allow them to cultivate more lucrative but labour intensive crops.

The majority of households in both districts who grew wheat reported being self-sufficient in both years, with slightly more reporting being so in the current year. (See Table 3.) (Calculations based on reported yields and household consumption suggested a slightly less optimistic conclusion.) Of the 12 households who reported having a wheat deficit in 2011-12, five increased the area planted in 2012-13; all five households then reported being self-sufficient in 2012-13. Six of the seven households who were deficit but who didn't increase the amount of wheat land were carrying debt; two of the seven explicitly mentioned constraints to growing more wheat: one sharecropper mentioned that his landlord would not allow the cultivation of wheat, while another faced water scarcity on his own and rented land, and that the returns from wheat would not cover the running costs of the tubewell required to irrigate the land; instead, he grew a mix of cotton, tomato and cucumber, which was more likely to allow him to recoup his costs. A number of the households who reported a wheat deficit in fact grew no wheat at all, apparently relying on markets for cash crops either by choice or obligation; several reported that they couldn't find additional land in general or for growing wheat.

Table 3: Household wheat self-sufficiency, Balkh

District	2011-12			2012-13			Change: 2011-12 to 2012-13		
	Grew at all	Reported self-sufficient	Calculated self-sufficient	Grew at all	Reported self-sufficient	Calculated self-sufficient	Grew less	Grew more	Grew same
Chimtal	13	10	7	14	12	9	2	4	9
Balkh	10	8	6	11	10	7	1	4	10

Approximately the same proportion of households (roughly three-quarters) grew cotton during the main winter growing season, and about half of those households increased the amount of land sown to cotton in 2012-13. (See Table 4.) Fewer households grew cotton during the shorter and more water-limited summer season, although in Chimtal three of the five households who grew cotton in 2011-12 increased the area in 2012-13.

The presence of watermelon pest in Balkh District appears to have discouraged watermelon cultivation there while encouraging it in Chimtal. In Balkh, the number of households cultivating watermelon in either season fell from seven to three, while in Chimtal it increased from seven to ten. In Balkh, total area cultivated to watermelon in both growing seasons declined by nearly three-quarters, with no area planted at all during summer 2013. In Chimtal, cultivated area increased by just over one-half.

36 Interview with farmer, Balkh District.

37 Interview with farmer, Balkh District.

Table 4: Change in amount of significant crops grown from 2011-12 to 2012-13, number of households, Balkh

Crop	Balkh									
	Chimtal					Balkh				
	Grew at all		Change in area			Grew at all		Change in area		
	2011-12	2012-13	+	-	=	2011-12	2012-13	+	-	=
Wheat	14	14	4	2	9	10	11	4	1	10
Cotton/winter	12	13	6	3	6	12	12	5	3	7
Cotton/summer	5	7	5	1	9	2	2	1	0	4
Opium poppy	4	3	3	1	11	0	0	0	0	15
Melon	4	5	3	0	12	0	0	0	0	15
Watermelon	7	9	3	2	10	4	3	0	3	12
Vegetables/winter	6	5	2	1	12	10	10	2	6	7
Vegetables/summer	1	1	1	0	14	11	10	6	3	6
Mung beans	11	11	6	0	9	3	5	2	0	13

+: grew more, -: grew less, =: grew the same

Some of the biggest changes in household cropping choices were in the cultivation of vegetables. (See Table 5.) The total area cultivated to vegetables by surveyed households in Balkh in the two cropping seasons declined by nearly one-third between 2011-12 and 2012-13, while area cultivated in Chimtal increased by two-thirds. While vegetables still make a significant contribution to the cash farm income of many households, especially in Balkh, the percentage of estimated income in the surveyed households in Balkh declined from 45 to 35 percent, while increasing from 18 to 28 percent in Chimtal.

Six of the households in Balkh District reduced the area cultivated to vegetables during the winter growing season due to a number of factors, including those more internal to the household such as the land dispute mentioned above which forced it to abandon more labour-intensive crops such as vegetables, or the inability to acquire enough land to grow cash crops beyond the wheat which is prioritised for food security. Several households mentioned external factors such as poor yields the previous year from crops such as cucumber, more attractive relative prices for cotton and other crops, and difficulty in accessing markets to sell vegetables which have a relatively short shelf life. Similar to the case cited above, three of the six households mentioned problems getting outputs to market, especially over the Salang. For instance:

Sometimes the closing of the Salang causes difficulties. At harvest time, trucks go to the districts and take the output directly to Kabul or Pakistan. Traders sometimes go directly to the landowners and agree on a package of the whole land, while other traders go to the wholesale market and fill 3-4 trucks. When the Salang is closed, the price of okra comes down. I am cultivating more cotton this year because the price was good.³⁸

While total area sown to summer vegetables also decreased in Balkh, six households did increase the amount of land they allocated to vegetables. Most respondents indicated that this was because they saw a good market and potential income for vegetables, while at least one household had never grown vegetables but started doing so in the place of watermelon due to disease. Households which reduced summer vegetable cultivation cited as reasons the inability to obtain land, shortage of water, high labour costs, and the opportunity cost of spending their time on farming, factors which were cited by other households as well, although apparently not critical enough to cause them to change their cropping choices.

³⁸ Interview with farmer, Balkh District.

Table 5: Total area sown to significant crops 2011-12 and 2012-13, Balkh households

Crop	Balkh							
	Chimtal				Balkh			
	Area sown, <i>jeribs</i>		% of total area sown		Area sown, <i>jeribs</i>		% of total area sown	
	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13
WINTER CROPS								
Wheat	101	112	38%	35%	92	114	25%	35%
Cotton	98	118	37%	36%	151	139	42%	43%
Opium poppy	9	12	3%	4%	0	0	0%	0%
Melon	11	15	4%	5%	0	0	0%	0%
Watermelon	18	25	7%	8%	16	8	5%	2%
Vegetables	15	27	6%	8%	66	38	18%	12%
Other winter	14	14	5%	4%	33	24	9%	7%
Orchards	11	11	4%	3%	6	7	2%	2%
TOTAL WINTER	273	318			359	322		
SUMMER CROPS								
Mung beans	31	41	37%	49%	11	24	11%	24%
Cotton	17	24	20%	23%	10	17	10%	16%
Melon	-	-	0%	0%	-	2	0%	2%
Watermelon	3	7	4%	7%	10	0	10%	0%
Vegetable	6	8	7%	8%	60	49	60%	47%
Sesame	26	26	31%	25%	7	7	7%	7%
Other summer					2	5	2%	5%
TOTAL SUMMER	83	106			100	104		

Changes in cropping choices and prices led to changes in the amount and percentage of income derived from individual crops. For instance, despite a decline in the absolute amount of land planted with cotton, in Balkh the percentage of income cotton provided rose from 49 to 66 percent, becoming a more significant percentage of farm income. In Chimtal, winter vegetables rose by 150 percent in the value they generated and from 18 to 33 percent in the percentage of income generated. In Balkh, on the other hand, the value of winter vegetables fell by 72 percent and the percentage contribution from 37 to 15 percent. With respect to summer vegetables, in Chimtal they rose in value by 38 percent, although there was no increase in the percentage they contributed to income; in Balkh, there was virtually no change in either value or their percentage contribution to income. In Chimtal, revenue generated by mung bean, cotton (summer), watermelon, vegetables (winter and summer), opium poppy and melon all increased.

Three of the four surveyed households in Chimtal who reported growing opium poppy in 2011-12 increased the area in 2012-13, while one household quit cultivation altogether. The latter household had grown one *jerib* in 2011-12, but his economic situation had improved through his other agricultural outputs and through non-farm employment, and therefore he concluded that growing opium poppy wasn't worth the risk:

*There were rumours that there would be eradication this year. Some people are willing to take the risk. The Taliban have left the area and so there is nothing to protect me. If my other crops give good results and no one else grows, then I will do very well from high prices. I have increased melon area by one *jerib* because the price was high; if there are no flies this year, I will do well. People don't grow melon because they are afraid of flies. This good situation may sustain because for the last 1-2 years the income from agriculture has been good. Also, now my son is working and so the economy of the household has improved.³⁹*

39 Interview with farmer, Chimtal District.

None of the three households which increased the area cultivated to opium poppy had experienced eradication in 2011-12. This was attributed to a combination of factors: a campaign which was somewhat half-hearted and which was aborted before their turn came, the location of their land far from the road, and Taliban influence in the area which deterred the eradication team.

On the other hand, in 2012-13 all three households experienced eradication, and considered it more serious than the previous year. At the time of fieldwork, none gave any indication that they would stop planting in the future.⁴⁰ One farmer, who had increased from four to six *jeribs* because of the “high price” but had lost most of it to eradication, noted that “the government can butcher me, but next year I will cultivate 30 *jeribs* of poppy. To eradicate now is cruelty. If nothing is left, I will pick up my family and move somewhere else, to Kabul or elsewhere.”⁴¹ Another farmer, who was shaking with anger, complained about the timing of eradication: “They have enmity with farmers and poor people because they came at harvest time. I have worked the entire year, but now nothing has been left; they should have come earlier so I could have done something else instead.”⁴² Indicating his intention to continue to cultivate, he said, “We don’t know from year to year; maybe the government won’t come next year, or maybe the Taliban will have more presence in the area and so the government won’t be able to come.” The third household noted that “if there is more *gadwadi*⁴³ [confusion] next year, I will sow more.”⁴⁴ While all three complained about the eradication campaign, it appears that at least two of the three had already done three rounds of collection, which would have yielded 40-55 percent of total output.⁴⁵ Two of the three households said that the role of the local *shura* in the campaign had been ambiguous because the heads of the *shuras* were themselves cultivating.

Surveyed households in both districts reported carrying significant levels of debt relative to their incomes. (See Table 6.) Debt was incurred for a variety of reasons, including productive ones such as obtaining agricultural inputs (e.g. seed, fertiliser, tractor rental) and purchasing a tractor and tools or a Zaranj, as well as consumption ones such as weddings, medical care (including travel to Pakistan), legal services, or the purchase of a television, household furnishings, solar power and food. The high average ratio of household debt to annual income was especially notable among the households in Balkh District. Roughly one-third of households had sold household assets, mainly livestock, in order to meet expenses related to illness or marriage. One household had sold off livestock and land in order to pay for major expenses related to a complicated legal case.

Table 6: Household debt, Balkh, US\$

	Took loan?				Avg HH Debt			Avg HH Income (2012-13)	HHs in debt	Avg debt as % of income
	2012-13	Prior Years	Both	Neither	From 2012-13	From Prior Years	All			
Chimtal	2	3	1	9	\$366	\$2,727	\$2,001	\$9,916	6	15%
Balkh	0	5	4	6	\$491	\$2,000	\$2,218	\$8,349	9	70%

Table notes: Average household debt includes households with debt only. Average household income includes all households. Average debt as percentage of income includes households with debt only.

As presented previously in Table 1, on average 8-9 percent of household incomes were gained through non-farm employment, a significant portion of which was in Mazar city. As noted above and in other analysis, Mazar’s construction and trading boom has been an important source of livelihoods for those in rural areas, especially after the suppression of opium poppy cultivation in 2007. Informal estimates put the proportion of casual workers who are from the rural districts

40 Because of the immediacy of the eradication, it is possible that the affected farmers were showing an emotional response. It is hard to predict their choices later in the year, when they might have cooled down and the economic and political environment is better known.

41 Interview with farmer, Chimtal District.

42 Interview with farmer, Chimtal District.

43 The term *gadwadi* means “confusion” but often conveys political disorder, such as what took place in the early 1990s. A number of respondents used the term in what seemed to be an allusion to that era.

44 Interview with farmer, Chimtal District.

45 Fieldworkers observed that because the fieldwork was done at the time of the eradication campaign it is possible that farmers were not admitting the extent to which the harvest had already been taken.

surrounding Mazar at 80 percent. Interviews with households, business owners in the two districts, and casual labourers at gathering sites in Mazar were consistent with the economic contraction described in section 4.1.1 above.

Roughly half of the households in each district reported that one or two members were working either full-time or part-time on non-farm activities. (While respondents were asked whether household members worked full- or part-time, the fluid interpretation of these categories makes distinguishing them pointless.) The most common non-farm employment was as labourer, driver (sometimes with the household's own vehicle transporting people or goods between the districts and Mazar) or shopkeeper. One household in Chintal reported that two brothers had been working as labourers in Iran for the last 10-11 months. Another common arrangement was for men to do occasional work on neighbours' farms for payment in cash or in-kind. Two households in Chintal reported that members worked in Jalalabad during the winter, one as a labourer, the other as a painter. In Balkh, one household member ran a cotton gin in the village, while a member of another household worked as a daily labourer in a brick factory outside of Mazar.

Table 7: Availability of casual labour and wages, Mazar-e Sharif

	May 2012	May 2013
Unskilled		
Days per month	25	16
Afs per day	300-450	200-300
Skilled		
Days per month	26	16
Afs per day	600-1,000	400-700

Table note: Averages based on interviews with casual labourers at gathering sites in Mazar-e Sharif.

While household respondents did not explicitly mention a decline in non-farm work opportunities in the last year, interviews with labourers in Mazar and business owners in the districts were in line with the broader picture of a contracting economy. In 2012, virtually none of the casual labourers interviewed had complained about the lack of work, while this year almost all did; every labourer interviewed reported less work available for both unskilled and skilled labour than in 2012 and at lower wages.⁴⁶ (See Table 7.) Some told stories of masons doing their own work rather than paying someone else to do it, while others complained that they were getting fewer days of employment on each job, as the size of projects had decreased.

The situation described by one unskilled labourer who commuted daily from Balkh District to Mazar to seek work was typical:

Last year, the labour situation was good. This time last year, I was working for 350-400 Afs per day, and I was never unemployed. I worked 25-26 days per month, except for Fridays. I was busy at work every day. At this time last year, my average salary was 8,500-9,000 Afs per month. You started working, and there was no need to come back to the chowk [public square] to sit and wait. If you started working at one building, you would continue for a month or else management would keep you on. This year, most work is 1-2 days duration, then you have to come back to the market and seek more work...This year, labour work is very scarce, and the wage is about 250-300 Afs per day. This is very low, especially if I only work 20-22 days—and that only if I am lucky. The reason for lack of work is the lack of activity in the construction sector. The capitalists and rich persons have closed down their spending because of 2014.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ While there may be a natural tendency to see the past more optimistically, it is interesting to note that none of the 16 labourers interviewed in May 2012 complained about the lack of work, and in fact 12 explicitly mentioned that there was more work available at higher wages than had been the case in 2011, when a drought in rainfed areas had reduced the demand for labour in rural areas and propelled men into the cities in pursuit of employment.

⁴⁷ Interview with casual labourer, Mazar.

As noted above, aside from a contraction in the economy, additional downward pressure on the labour market has come from both the new informal settlements on the edge of Mazar as well as from the continued reduction in labour migration to Iran. Information on wage labour is somewhat inconsistent. For instance, data provided by World Food Programme Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping indicates that the average unskilled daily wage between January-May 2012 was 295 Afs, while for the same period in 2013 it was 309 Afs, essentially constant. Figures for skilled labour for the same periods were 673 Afs and 700 Afs, respectively. These figures are higher than the ones provided by labourers interviewed for this study. Given that there are seasonal fluctuations in wages—rising during the peak agricultural seasons and falling during the slack ones—and that the fluctuations also vary annually depending on weather conditions, some of the variation may be driven by expectations about the future demand for labour in a given year. However, data from the WFP/VAM time series (see Table 8) reinforces the notion of a flattening if not decline in wages in the last two years. Moreover, WFP data also show that the price of wheat flour in April and May 2013 increased by 47 and 42 percent respectively over the same months the previous year, and that the terms of trade between labour and wheat flour declined by 21 and 18 percent during the same periods.⁴⁸

Table 8: Wages for unskilled and skilled daily labour, 2003-13, Afs

Year	Unskilled		Skilled	
	Annual average	Change	Annual average	Change
2003	110	-	-	-
2004	151	38%	-	-
2005	151	0%	-	-
2006	137	-9%	-	-
2007	148	8%	593	-
2008	139	-6%	483	-18%
2009	157	12%	515	7%
2010	238	52%	630	22%
2011	285	20%	735	17%
2012	316	11%	745	1%
2013	300	-5%	760	2%

Table notes: Source: WFP VAM Unit. Current Afghanistan. Wage rates tend to peak during April-July, depending on conditions in a particular year.

The one apparent exception to the reported lower labour wages was that, according to respondents, the agricultural wage was 300 Afs per day (without food) as compared with 200-250 Afs during the same period the previous year. Some attributed the higher agricultural wage to the need to attract labour away from urban construction work, which is preferred by many because it is considered better-paying and less physically demanding. The wage for poppy harvesting was given as 400-500 Afs per day (including breakfast and lunch), due to the difficulty of the work and the crop's higher profitability. Local labourers are doing the harvesting, with no need to bring in talent from elsewhere as was done several years ago. The given daily agricultural wage for women was 120 Afs per day, which involved mainly weeding vegetables and collecting cotton.

⁴⁸ Initial Market Price Bulletin for the months of April and May 2013. World Food Programme, "Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping" May and June 2013. Terms of trade indicate how much labour is required to obtain wheat.

5. Badakhshan Province

5.1 Badakhshan Province background⁴⁹

Badakhshan Province lies in an isolated yet sensitive and strategic corner of far northeastern Afghanistan, bordering Tajikistan to the north, Pakistan to the southeast, and China at the tip of the lofty and inaccessible Wakhan Corridor to the northeast. Badakhshan's 44,836 km sq land area is currently divided into 28 *woleswalis*, increased from 13 in 2006. The large number—the most of any province in Afghanistan—is due to a combination of isolating geography and current and past governments' attempts to create patronage positions for their followers. Badakhshan is overwhelmingly rural, with only 4 percent of its 904,700 residents located in urban areas, 90 percent in the provincial centre Faizabad.⁵⁰ Badakhshan's population is overwhelmingly Tajik (estimated 77 percent from CSO/UNFPA 2004 based on language), followed by Uzbeks and Pamiris, along with much smaller numbers of Kyrgyz who inhabit the Wakhan Corridor.⁵¹

While recent road construction has improved linkages and reduced transport costs, especially between Faizabad and Taloqan in neighbouring Takhar Province to the west, most areas of the province remain isolated, and in some cases cannot be accessed during the winter.

Badakhshan's isolation and poor infrastructure have limited economic opportunities within the province to small-scale and informal enterprises, and throughout history seasonal and long-term migration to other areas of Afghanistan and smuggling of drugs and weapons and other informal trade have been important parts of the livelihoods and political picture.

According to the draft 2011-12 NRVA, Badakhshan has 11th worst (of 33 reporting provinces) rate of persons who are gainfully employed.⁵² In one view, the lack of opportunities post-2001 for former commanders in the private security and contracting sectors that have existed in other provinces has reinforced the importance of narcotic production and smuggling.⁵³ While water is relatively abundant due to the location of the Panj and Kokcha rivers watersheds (the major watersheds in the northern Amu Darya system) within the province, the mountainous terrain limits the amount of land which can be cultivated. There are no major modern irrigation systems, so most agricultural land is watered through local channelling of river or spring water.

Aside from the province's remoteness from markets and its poor infrastructure, agriculture in high-altitude Badakhshan is further constrained by the cold climate, which in many places limits cropping to one short growing season. Staple crops include wheat (irrigated and rain-fed) and, depending on the area, rice, barley, maize, flax and opium poppy. Fruits include apricots, walnuts, pistachios, mulberries, melons, watermelons and apples. Fodder crops include alfalfa (*rishqa*), Persian clover (*shaftal*) and grass pea (*patak*). Animal husbandry is an important part of livelihoods within the province. Poultry production has taken hold in recent years, in part through the support of development agencies, and there are reports that production has successfully competed with foreign imports. Development agencies such as the UK Department for International Development and the Aga Khan Foundation have also been supporting beekeeping in the province, and Badakhshi honey has found its way to high-end supermarkets such as Finest in Kabul.

Badakhshan's main endowments are minerals and other natural resources, including lapis lazuli and other gems, gold, salt, mica, limestone and coal. While mines have historically provided seasonal employment in the endowed districts and generated some wealth, illegal mining, lack of transparency in the contracting of rights, extraction using crude low-quality techniques, and

49 For more extensive background information, see Fishstein, "A Little Bit Poppy-Free."

50 Central Statistics Organization, "Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2012/13."

51 The group referred to in the Constitution as "Pamiris" includes the various Ismaili ethno-linguistic groups such as Sheghnis, Ishkashimis, Zibakis and Wakhis.

52 Central Statistics Organization, "Draft National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, 2011-2012".

53 See Fabrizio Foschini, "A Thin Line Between Insurgency and Local Politics in Badakhshan," *Afghan Analysts Network*, November 2012. During fieldwork for this study, one professional from Faizabad said that the province's reputation for smuggling was so bad that when he travelled by road to Pul-i Khumri he told police check-posts that he was from Taloqan to reduce the chance that he would be detained on suspicion of smuggling.

the lack of locally-added value limit the ability of these resources to generate broad-based wealth, and endanger the long-term value of the resources.⁵⁴ The lack of reliable and reasonably priced electricity (i.e. a kilowatt costs 50 Afs in Faizabad, more than 16 times the cost in Kabul) imposes a further constraint to the development of commerce and industry in the province.

While *Jamiat-e Islami*, which was led by the late Burhanuddin Rabbani from Yaftal, is the most dominant political force in the province, historical, geographical and political factors have produced a fragmented, localised political situation in which no one dominant force or strongman has emerged. Rather, Badakhshan's physical geography has contributed to enduring strong local and regional identities as well as local fiefdoms. Badakhshan was the only province not to fall under Taliban rule, but the cohesion produced by the need to band together against a common enemy was not strong enough in the longer term to overcome fragmentary political tendencies; competition for power, resources and trade (including drugs) routes; and the strengths of conservative religious groups in some areas of the province. Because the Taliban never controlled Badakhshan and the Germans who were the lead nation at the Faizabad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) never challenged the basic power structure or paid attention to opium poppy cultivation and in fact were quite accommodating with local powerholders, the fragmented structure has remained intact.⁵⁵ Civil service appointments at provincial and district levels have been used tactically by Kabul in the time-honoured tradition of, if not furthering its own partisans, at least ensuring that the competition is stymied. Many locally dominant powerholders are the descendants of historically well-off landed families, while others acquired their wealth and power during the *jihad* and later years. Some have further adapted by getting themselves elected to the Parliament or provincial assembly.⁵⁶

Security in the province is therefore highly localised, with instability more often the result of local conflicts and competition over power and smuggling routes than AOGs. Warduj, a strategic area on the road to the key smuggling route to Ishkishim on the Tajikistan border, is considered one of the least secure areas, with conflicts arising due to a range of often-overlapping and related factors of religious conservatism, factional politics, drug-related violence and personal competition between commanders. Khoshtak, which is part of Jurm District, has also been historically insecure.

According to the International NGO Safety Office-Afghanistan, in 2011 total incidents in Badakhshan increased by nearly one-third over 2010, which marked three straight years of increases. In 2012, incidents fell by one-fifth, although as of mid-year 2013, incidents were one-third higher than half of the total for 2012, putting the province on track for a significant increase for the year. The German-led PRT closed in October 2012 as part of the consolidation of international military forces across the north.

5.1.1 Economy in spring 2013

The short-term economic outlook in Badakhshan Province as a whole in 2012-13 was better than the previous year, when a long and punishing winter left the population with livestock losses estimated at 10 percent overall and caused many households to incur significant debt. The long winter also delayed the start of the construction season. While conditions were better in spring 2013, as in other urban areas of Afghanistan, in Faizabad there were complaints about the lack of work for unskilled and semi-skilled casual labour in the construction sector. Similar to Balkh, there is definitely a widely reported perception that the overall economy has contracted. Given the province's lack of industry and its relatively unproductive agriculture, a downturn in urban labour employment may have implications for a rural population that is highly dependent on urban migration to Faizabad, as well as beyond to Taloqan, Kunduz, Mazar, Kabul or Iran. Enrolment

54 See "Ministry of Mines Concerned Over Badakhshan Lapis Mine," *Tolo News.com*, 11 August 2011.

<http://www.tolonews.com/en/business/3572-ministry-of-mines-concerned-over-badakhshan-lapis-mine> (accessed 29 October 2013).

55 Philipp Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention: A Review of Developments in Badakhshan and Kunduz Provinces," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, November 2013.

56 For more information on the political situation in Badakhshan, see Fabrizio Foschini, "Campaign Trail 2010 (1): Badakhshan—Drugs, Border Crossings and Parliamentary Seats," *Afghan Analysts Network*, June 2010.

in the ANA or ANP continues to provide a livelihoods option, although there seems to be an increasing consciousness of the dangers connected with police and military service, especially when it requires being in the insecure areas of the south and east. The continued expansion of opium poppy cultivation, however, may be increasing the demand for labour.

There were also concerns about the late arrival of the rains this year. Because the rains were poor in many places, there is even less rainfed opium poppy crop than usual.

5.1.2 Politics and security in spring 2013

Overall, security in Badakhshan has deteriorated over the last few years due to a number of dynamics. Following a number of attacks on government facilities and security forces in 2012, in the first months of 2013 there were a number of security incidents in the province, the most significant being a March attack on an ANA convoy in Warduj after an ANSF operation to clear insurgents from the district. The attack ultimately led to the death of around 16 ANA personnel, one in the initial fighting and the rest either executed by the Taliban or killed in subsequent fighting, depending on the source. Six personnel were said to have been released through negotiation with local elders. More recently, in September 2013, 18 ANP were killed in Warduj in an attack on a convoy during another operation to clear Taliban and international fighters. There was a subsequent attack in which AOGs took over the district headquarters in Karan wa Munjan. There is speculation that the clearing operation in Warduj had actually strengthened AOGs by creating cohesion among them that was previously lacking. ALP have been introduced in both districts, in Warduj about two months prior to the fieldwork.

Some of the insecurity in the province is attributed to Taliban or Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) attempts to establish a presence in the province (and elsewhere in northern Afghanistan) as the international military forces withdraw. The porous border with Tajikistan may also be of interest to the IMU in its attempt to gain a foothold near the borders of the Central Asian republics in the run-up to 2014. Some believe that the IMU and other Central Asian militant groups are positioning themselves in anticipation of the withdrawal of NATO forces, which previously might have limited their mobility.⁵⁷ Tajikistan's decision to extend its treaty, scheduled to expire in 2014, for Russian bases and troops in the country for an additional 30 years can be seen in that context. Some Afghan officials and members of parliament have blamed Pakistan for their role in the Warduj fighting, saying that it was due to Pakistan not wishing to see the completion of a road directly linking Afghanistan with China, as it would compete with Pakistan's Karakoram Highway.⁵⁸

As is often the case in Badakhshan, it is difficult to attribute insecurity strictly to one factor or group; rather, it is typically the result of a confluence of interests of insurgents, local powerholders, and local warlords and criminals—with the lines between them often unclear. According to one analyst, “The insurgency finds itself magically appearing in those areas where the competition between rival powerbrokers is stronger—and where the conditions are often made ripe for the cultivation of poppy or heroin refining.”⁵⁹ Some have noted that the limited hostility of AOGs (i.e. releasing captured ANP personnel after negotiation) shows “the high degree of interdependence between insurgents and powerholders in Badakhshan,”⁶⁰ although such accommodation seems to apply mainly to local ANP on whose behalf local communities can negotiate, rather than to captured ANSF from other provinces.

57 See Saule Mukhametrakhimova, “Central Asia at Risk from Post-2014 Afghanistan” (Kabul: IWPR, 20 August 2013, Central Asia RCA Issue 708). Also Ahmed Rashid, “Central Asian States Must Unite to Halt the Spread of Jihadism,” *The Financial Times*, 20 January 2014.

58 See “Moi Blames Badakhshan Insecurity on Eastern Neighbour,” *Tolo News.com*, 20 April 2013. <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/10218-moi-blames-badakhshan-insecurity-on-eastern-neighbour> (accessed 29 October 2013).

59 See Foschini, “Thin Line.”

60 Münch, “Local Afghan Power Structures,” p. 62.

5.1.3 Counter-narcotics

According to UNODC and MCN's final verified figures, in 2012-13, 2,798 ha of opium poppy was eradicated from 347 villages in Badakhshan, a stunning increase of 57 percent over 2011-12, and the highest amount of any province. The increase in eradicated area by more than one-half runs counter to the national picture, where overall eradication decreased by roughly one-quarter. Badakhshan represented 42 percent of total national area eradicated, and had more than twice the area of second-place Helmand. By a huge margin Badakhshan was also the only province to eradicate more area than was left after eradication; Badakhshan eradicated over one-half of the cultivated area, as compared with Helmand, Nangarhar, and Balkh, which eradicated 2, 1, and 16 percent, respectively. The efficacy of the eradication campaign in the fieldwork areas is discussed below.

The eradication campaign in Badakhshan ran from 13 May until 10 August, depending on altitude. At the time of fieldwork, eight districts had been done, and the campaign had been completed in Jurm but not yet started in higher-altitude Khash. Province-wide, 12 districts had been identified for eradication, with the character and intensity of crop destruction to be determined according to local conditions. According to UNODC officials, in the secure districts the target was at least 80 percent (100 percent in Argo, Keshm, Shahr-e Bozorg, Yaftal and Khash), while in the insecure districts (Warduj, Jurm and Darayim, where there are both opium poppy and labs) the target was 15-70 percent. According to UNODC, "In areas where Taliban are present, farmers can defy. There is a limit as to what public awareness can do."⁶¹ In Argo stones were thrown at the eradication team and anti-personnel mines were found on the edge of targeted fields. Final reports from MCN/UNODC state that there was only one security incident in the province, which resulted in the injury of one person. According to UNODC officials, in Warduj, Tashken and Darayim the Taliban were supporting farmers and had issued a fatwa [religious decree] saying that it was permitted to grow, as well as providing security for fields and collecting *ushr*.⁶²

According to UNODC, the district chiefs of police are now taking the lead rather than the *woleswals* as was the case in past years, with the provincial-level department of counter-narcotics responsible for coordination. Labourers are recruited for 500 Afs per day to do the actual eradication, with the government paying for transport to the target areas from Faizabad or elsewhere. The MCN final report on eradication singled out Badakhshan for praise for increasing the area eradicated, without incurring any casualty, which was said to "indicate[s] good leadership, planning, and overall coordination of MCN leadership with concerned organizations and Badakhshan governor's commitment in poppy eradication."⁶³ MCN also suggested that in Badakhshan there should be more of a focus on the negative impact of eradication so as to mitigate the effects on the people.

Inspired by a similar activity in Helmand, MCN is developing a proposal for a food zone in Badakhshan, and USAID is instructing its contractors under the new Regional Agricultural Development Programme (RADP) to support these initiatives "where possible and appropriate."⁶⁴

5.2 Badakhshan Province fieldwork areas: Khash and Jurm

In Badakhshan, as in 2011-12, fieldwork was conducted in the two adjacent districts of Khash and Jurm, both of which are historically opium poppy growing areas. (See Map 2.)

Khash is located to the southeast of the provincial centre Faizabad, either 40 or 80 km, depending on which road is taken. Khash has a population of 15,000 distributed over just 12 villages.⁶⁵ Khash's population is overwhelmingly Uzbek (90 percent), with the remaining 10 percent Tajik.

61 Interview with UNODC officials, Faizabad.

62 As noted above, there is often confusion about *ushr* and other payments to Taliban and others who claim religious sanction. In the Badakhshan fieldwork areas, payments of wheat and cash were made to local clergy by households based on the number of adult males who attended the mosque. Respondents noted that only households who were able to afford the payments made them. See David Mansfield, "'Taxation' in Central Helmand and Kandahar."

63 See MCN, "Final Evaluation Report," 5.

64 USAID, "Request for Proposal (RFP) Regional Agricultural Development Program—North and West." 18 April 2013.

65 Number of villages from the Badakhshan Provincial Development Plan. Population figures from CSO, "Population Estimation 2011-12."

The majority (60 percent) of Khash's agricultural land is relatively unproductive *lalmi* (rainfed). Khash's high elevation (approximately 3,000 metres) means a short growing season, although in the 2010-11 drought Khash's high location in the shade of the mountains reduced evaporation of water and as a result Khash was not as badly affected as other lower-altitude and more exposed places. Jurm is located southeast of Khash, roughly 70 km from Faizabad. Jurm's population is larger than Khash's, with approximately 60,000 persons distributed over 55 villages. Jurm's population is ethnically similar to the rest of the province.⁶⁶ Unlike Khash, most of Jurm's agricultural land (70 percent) is irrigated, with the remaining rainfed.

Common crops in the two districts include wheat, barley, potato, beans, poppy, *chars*, *patak*, *ghamu* (vetch), cumin, onions, tomatoes and eggplant. In addition, maize, mustard, okra, cauliflower, and melons are more common in Jurm, and much less so in Khash. In Khash, potatoes and carrots are grown for the market, while other vegetables are grown mostly for local consumption. In both places fruits and nuts include walnuts, apples, apricots, mulberries, peaches and almonds. As noted above, Badakhshan's high altitude and cold climate mostly limit cropping to one season. Due to Khash's higher and colder elevation, events in the agricultural cycle, including the harvest of opium poppy, are typically 20-30 days behind Jurm. Because of the colder climate, in Khash opium poppy is planted only in the spring.

Unlike in 2012, households had no complaints about the harshness of the recently concluded winter, which last year resulted in the deaths of large numbers of animals and the incurring of significant debt. In Khash, the spring rains were considered to have been poor, although steady rain which occurred at the time of fieldwork had created some optimism because most crops at this altitude had not yet reached harvest stage. Development agencies such as Mercy Corps and the Aga Khan Network had given support to vegetable cultivation, but respondents noted that the lack of access to markets for outputs was a major constraint. The nearest significant markets for outputs are Baharak or Faizabad. Transport by vehicle to Baharak costs 20-30 Afs per ser, which is prohibitive given the sale price of low-value agricultural outputs, while by donkey the journey takes three hours each way and farmers claim that they don't obtain good prices because the journey damages the products.

Respondents acknowledged that many development activities had taken place in the two districts, including roads, pipe schemes, clinics, goat distribution, retaining walls, canal cleaning, solar electricity, post-flood assistance and, especially in Jurm, some assistance with fruits, vegetables and orchards. As noted above, respondents expressed appreciation for the work which had been done. In Khash, the distribution of seeds and fertiliser was characterised as relatively honest, and somewhat according to plan. Respondents attributed this to the low population numbers relative to NGOs, which meant that more aid reached the people, but this seems an unlikely explanation. In fact, relative to Balkh there were surprisingly few of the usual complaints about the unfair diversion of inputs and resources, especially in Khash, although respondents noted that recently assistance had decreased due to insecurity and complained that counter-narcotics money which was supposed to be going to farmers had been diverted to other uses, even if those uses were legitimate ones such as schools. In some places there is 24-hour electricity from either solar or microhydro installations. Consistent with Badakhshan's history as a centre of literature and education, respondents noted that "most" of the young girls in Jurm were educated, at least to 12th class and many of them to an even higher level.⁶⁷ Some improvements in roads have created benefits through strengthening market linkages, but as mentioned above and discussed further below, market access is still limited (in places only to donkeys), especially in Khash. There were some complaints about the low harvest prices and the lack of cold storage, although complaints about the latter were not as prevalent as in Balkh, where expectations may be higher.

Compared with 2012, security has deteriorated in Jurm, driven in part by the above-mentioned declining security situation in Warduj, which lies directly to the east and which is a critical area on the route to borders with both Tajikistan and Pakistan. Respondents said that Taliban elements were trying to expand to other parts of Jurm, but that people were resisting because they didn't want

66 CSO, "Population Estimation 2011-12."

67 According to the 2007-08 NRVA, Badakhshan was below only Kabul, Herat and Balkh in female literacy.

to give up development activities and public services. ALP have been introduced in Jurm as well as in Warduj. A smaller clearing operation in Jurm about two months before fieldwork had improved security on the west side of the river, although problems remain on the east side of the river, including Khoshtak, which is considered a centre of Taliban activity and was openly occupied by armed opposition groups (AOGs) during part of the summer.⁶⁸ The nature of the “Taliban” threat in that area was not clear, however; variously it was attributed to bored and disaffected youth, local power struggles, competition over trade routes, insurgency, local disputes, factional politics and even the above-mentioned Pakistani intervention to suppress direct Afghan trade with China. As noted above, in Badakhshan it is often difficult to attribute responsibility to one of those factors. The clearing operation had apparently resulted in the humiliation of the head of the Jurm District Development Assembly (DDA).

In Jurm District, ALP are present in Jurm centre, Dashtak, Kharandab, Gombad, Saretal, Deh Sangan, Changa-e Payen, Qaymaghchi and Changa-e Bala—pretty much in all places except for Nawi Jurm. The ALP were said to be organised by Zalmai Khan Mujaddedi from Jurm, a former Jamiat commander who is an erstwhile Karzai loyalist and member of the *Wolesi Jirga* [lower house of Parliament]. Zalmai Khan is considered the most significant political figure in western Badakhshan, with the placement of his loyalists in key positions (i.e. his brother was given the job of guarding the valuable lapis mines in Kuran wa Munjan) giving him influence or control over territory and border crossings.⁶⁹

Respondents in Jurm mentioned that the amount of work available for labourers was down due to reduced migration to Iran and the reduction in NGO activities, but that opium poppy was creating employment. In Khash, respondents also noted the decreased migration to Iran compared with several years before. Respondents also said that enrolment in the ANA was down because potential recruits were increasingly reluctant to go to dangerous places, but also because the tightened vetting procedures to avoid enrolment of opposition elements had made enlistment more difficult than was previously the case.

5.3 Analysis of households in fieldwork areas

In line with overall conditions in the province, the agricultural situation in the fieldwork areas was generally better than in 2012, as there had been no long and punishing winter with high livestock losses and resulting household debt. On the negative side, rains were untimely (late), although this was not so much of a problem in higher altitude Khash where crops are planted later. There were reports that due to the previous year’s long winter which had limited other work alternatives, liquorice⁷⁰ in Khash had been harvested at levels and with methods which were unsustainable, and so was increasingly scarce. Harvesting is especially a livelihood activity for women and children.

Amongst the surveyed households, average estimated on-farm incomes were fairly consistent between 2011-12 and 2012-13, with little or no change (Table 9). In Khash, estimated farm incomes of three-quarters of the households decreased in 2012-13 over the previous year, while in Jurm two-thirds increased. With an average estimated income per capita per day of US\$1.19 (Khash) or \$0.58 (Jurm) as shown in Table 9, the overwhelming majority of surveyed households can be assumed to meet their basic requirements only with great difficulty. As shown in Table 10, virtually all of the 30 households accumulate less than \$2 per person per day.⁷¹

Table 9: Income profile of fieldwork areas, Badakhshan (US\$)

68 Later clearing operations in Jurm included one during the second week of December (2013), perhaps to rid the area of insurgents before the onset of winter. The operation was mainly in the southeast part of the district, and was said to have been met with opposition by AOGs.

69 Antonio Giustozzi and Dominique Orsini, “Centre-Periphery Relations in Afghanistan: Badakhshan Between Patrimonialism and Institution-Building,” *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (March 2009): 1-16.

70 Liquorice has historically been one of the medicinal plants harvested in parts of northern Afghanistan and exported for use in a range of herbal medicines, sweeteners, flavouring in tobacco, or even as an ingredient in fire extinguisher compounds. Grassy plants with long underground roots which are dormant in winter, roots are typically harvested during the fall and sold either wet or dried. See Abdul Majid Wafiq, President [director] of Afghan Plants Company, Ministry of Commerce, Kabul, “The Role of Medicinal Plants in Afghanistan’s Trade,” Undated PowerPoint. http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/RALF/RALF3_002.pdf#page=2&zoom=auto,315,0

71 Relative to Balkh, which is more integrated into markets, the omitted portions of income (i.e. in-kind remuneration for work on neighbours’ fields, production from household animals) may be more significant in Badakhshan.

	2011-12	2012-13							
	Avg on-farm income	Avg on-farm income	Avg non-farm income	Avg HH income	Avg HH size	Avg Income per-capita	Avg Income per-capita per day	Percent of income on-farm	Percent of income non-farm
Khash	\$2,916	\$3,065	\$1,602	\$4,885	10	\$487	\$1.33	63%	37%
Jurm	\$1,216	\$1,443	\$520	\$2,163	9	\$251	\$0.69	67%	23%

Table notes: See caveats on estimates of farm incomes in the methodology section above. Information was not collected on 2011-12 non-farm income, so it is not possible to compare total household income.

Table 10: Breakdown of number of households by income per person per day, 2012-13, Badakhshan

Income per person per day	Khash	Jurm
Less than US\$1	4	11
\$1-2	9	4
\$2-5	2	-
More than \$5	-	-

As a very rough comparison, the average per capita income among the households in Khash were 1.5 times the 2007-08 NRVA poverty line of \$0.75 per person per day, while in Jurm it was only three-quarters. In Khash, two households fell below the poverty line, while in Jurm eight did.

Nearly all households (all but one household in each area) reported growing at least some wheat in 2012-13. In both districts, a smaller proportion of households (slightly more than one-half and one-third in Khash and Jurm, respectively) reported being self-sufficient in wheat in 2012-13 as compared with the previous year. (See Table 11.) In both years, a smaller proportion of Jurm households reported being self-sufficient. (As was the case in Balkh, calculations based on reported yields and household consumption suggested a less optimistic conclusion.) Of the 13 households in the two districts who were not self-sufficient in wheat in 2011-12, only three subsequently increased the area planted to wheat, and none of those households reported being self-sufficient in 2012-13. (As noted above, in Balkh all five households who reported a wheat deficit and who then increased wheat area predicted self-sufficiency in 2012-13.) A slightly higher proportion of sharecropped area is devoted to wheat than to other crops.

Table 11: Household wheat self-sufficiency, Badakhshan

	2011-12			2012-13			Change: 2011-12 to 2012-13		
	Grew at all	Reported self-sufficient	Calculated self-sufficient	Grew at all	Reported self-sufficient	Calculated self-sufficient	Grew less	Grew more	Grew same
Khash	14	11	5	14	8	5	5	3	7
Jurm	13	6	4	14	5	2	5	2	8
TOTAL	27	17	9	28	13	7	10	5	15

The most notable overall cropping change between 2011-12 and 2012-13 was an increase in the prevalence of opium poppy cultivation. (See Table 12.) Twenty-seven of the 30 households surveyed in the two districts had cultivated opium poppy in the 2012-13 growing season. Only two households had not grown in either year. Opium poppy remains an important part of the economy in the surveyed areas, and appears to be becoming even more so. Of the 20 households which had cultivated in 2011-12, eight increased the amount of land over the previous year, nine maintained the same amount of land, and only three decreased the amount of land. Overall, the amount of land devoted to opium poppy increased by 45 percent over the previous year. In Jurm both the number of households and the area sown doubled from the previous year. The primary reasons given by respondents for increasing cultivated area were the high returns for opium poppy, lack of other options either in agriculture or in non-farm work, and the tepid quality of the eradication. In Khash, respondents said that in addition to the significant sale price of opium, poppy seeds are used for making oil; 7 kg of seeds produces 3 kg of oil, which is sold for 80-100 Afs per kg, considered a good price. The residue of the seeds is used for *kunjara* (a cotton-seed cake

which is used for animal feed), while leaves and other remnants are used for soap, and stems used for cooking and heating. The dynamics of opium poppy cultivation in the surveyed areas are discussed in more detail below.

Table 12: Change in amount of significant crops grown from 2011-12 to 2012-13, number of households: Badakhshan

Crop	Badakhshan									
	Khash					Jurm				
	Grew at all		Change in area			Grew at all		Change in area		
	2011-12	2012-13	+	-	=	2011-12	2012-13	+	-	=
Wheat	14	14	3	5	7	13	14	2	5	8
Opium poppy	13	14	6	1	8	7	13	10	2	3
Vegetables/winter	3	3	1	0	14	0	1	1	0	14
Melon	-	-	-	-	-	1	0	0	1	14
Orchards	4	5	2	0	13	3	3	0	0	15
Barley	2	1	0	2	13	6	5	4	3	8
Poplar	2	2	0	0	15	1	1	0	0	15
Alfalfa	4	4	0	1	14	6	4	1	2	12
Vegetable/summer	0	0	0	0	15	0	1	1	0	14
Potato	10	14	5	0	10	5	6	4	2	9
Maize	3	3	0	0	15	2	0	1	3	11
Shaftal (clover)	0	0	0	0	15	12	9	1	4	10
<i>Patak</i> (grass pea)	2	3	2	0	13	1	2	2	0	13
<i>Nakhod</i> (chickpea)	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	0	15

+: grew more, -: grew less, =: grew the same

The only other notable change was in the increased significance of potato, which aside from opium poppy is the most important cash crop in the area, with an increase in both the number of households growing and the area they devoted to it. This was especially the case in Khash, where four households adopted potato and one other household increased land cultivated; four of the five households reduced the area devoted to wheat to accommodate potato. Three of the four newly adopting households had received potato seeds and fertilizer from an NGO. In Jurm, three households newly adopted potato and one increased the amount of land; two of these three new households reduced the land devoted to wheat. In both areas, respondents noted that potato was a good source of cash income: "Potato gives good income. I was happy with potatoes last year, so I increased the amount of land to potatoes this year."⁷² In fact, households tended to regard potato and opium poppy as the two best sources of cash income, albeit not at the same level. As one farmer who had maintained one *jerib* of opium poppy while adopting potato said, "My income is increasing. I am earning a regular salary, plus farming own land. Poppy and potatoes will improve my livelihoods."⁷³ Only two of 15 households which cultivated potato in 2011-12 reduced the area in 2012-13; one increased the amount of opium poppy, while the other cited poor output due to disease, the difficulty of transporting to market, and the need to obtain higher cash income to liquidate debt.

72 Interview with farmer, Jurm.

73 Interview with farmer, Khash.

Table 13: Area sown to significant crops 2011-12 and 2012-13: Badakhshan

Crop	Badakhshan							
	Khash				Jurm			
	Area sown, <i>jeribs</i>		% of total area sown		Area sown, <i>jeribs</i>		% of total area sown	
	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13
Wheat	96	99	62%	58%	52	47	62%	52%
Opium poppy	19	23	12%	13%	9	18	12%	20%
Vegetables/winter	7	8	5%	5%	-	1	-	1
Potato	13	18	8%	10%	5	6	5%	6%
<i>Patak</i> (grass pea)	3	6	2%	3%	1	3	1%	3%
Orchards	5	6	3%	4%	4	4	5%	5%
<i>Nakhod</i> (chickpea)	1	-	0%	1%	1	1	1%	1%
Barley	5	2	3%	1%	7	8	8%	8%
Poplar	2	2	1%	1%	1	1	1%	1%
Alfalfa	6	5	4%	3%	5	3	6%	3%
Other winter								
TOTAL winter	156	170			85	89		
Maize	4	4	100%	100%	5	3	22%	18%
<i>Shaftal</i> (clover)	-	-	-	-	18	14	78%	82%
TOTAL summer	4	4			23	17		

Surveyed households in the two districts in Badakhshan had a higher average debt burden than the households in Balkh. (See Table 14.) Debt burden was significant for a number of households, including four whose debt exceeded their annual household income, in one case by nearly three times. Households took on debt for productive reasons such as re-building a destroyed house, purchase of tradable goods (sometimes taken in-kind and repaid in cash), and purchase of vehicles or draught animals, but more often for consumption or in response to shocks to the household, including food and household necessities, wedding-related expenses and legal cases. The most common (and preferred) source of loans was relatives, followed by shopkeepers, who often provided loans in-kind (food or household supplies) on a sort of revolving fund basis that resulted in an on-going relationship with the borrower. One household head in Jurm had borrowed cash from his landlord from whom he was also sharecropping one *jerib* of land (half of which was sown to opium poppy). While total debt among the households was higher in Khash, on average debt as a percentage of income was higher in Jurm. Less than a quarter of households reported selling off animals or other assets to deal with debt, and only one household reported acquiring productive assets such as a vehicle. The relationship between debt and opium poppy cultivation is discussed further below.

Table 14: Household debt, Badakhshan, US\$

	Took loan?				Avg HH Debt			Avg HH Income (2012-13)	HHs in debt	Avg debt as % of income
	2012-13	Prior Years	Both	Neither	From 2012-13	From Prior Years	All			
Khash	4	4	1	6	\$647	\$1,207	\$1,030	\$4,015	9	51%
Jurm	5	3	0	7	\$382	\$1,333	\$739	\$1,642	8	82%

Table notes: Average household debt includes households with debt only. Average household income includes all households. Average debt as percentage of income includes households with debt only.

Respondents in both Khash and Jurm reported reduction in aid project-related employment, both labour and staff, due to the closing of the PRT at Faizabad and the reduction of projects by NGOs. In Jurm, a restaurant owner reported that he was no longer providing food for NGO workshops, and that fewer NGO workers were building homes. Traders who regularly traveled to Mazar to

purchase goods reported making fewer trips and having more difficulty in getting credit from their Mazar wholesalers, which would indicate a higher level of caution. ANSF recruiting has continued as a livelihoods strategy, although there is increasing perception of the dangers connected with police and military service, especially in the insecure areas of the country. Respondents noted that the insecurity in Warduj was negatively affecting local markets due to Warduj's strategic location on the road.

As presented in Table 9 above, non-farm employment provided a significant proportion of income to surveyed households, 32 and 25 percent respectively for Khash and Jurm. Three-fifths of households in Khash and one-half in Jurm reported that one or more members were working either full- or part-time off the farm, including weeding other peoples' fields. (As a comparison, in Chintal and Balkh districts of Balkh Province, the corresponding proportion of income earned from non-farm sources was eight, with roughly half of households reporting off-farm or non-farm employment of some sort.) The most common employment was in shopkeeping/trade (seven persons), ANA (five persons), and general and agricultural labour (three persons), including weeding and collection of opium poppy, which like other forms of agricultural labour was often paid in-kind. Other employment included as driver, ALP, teacher, shepherd, tailor, watchmen for agricultural fields and worker in the lapis mines. Some of these activities (e.g. shepherd, watchmen, lapis worker) were also paid largely in-kind.

Respondents claimed that non-farm work opportunities were more limited than the previous year. Of 17 households who had members with non-farm employment in either year, three reported conditions better this year, eight reported worse, and six reported no change.

One household who had taken on 20,000 Afs in debt this year to cover household necessities and farm inputs and who was growing one *jerib* of opium poppy noted that:

I didn't grow [opium poppy] last year, so now I am in debt. Otherwise, nothing comes from farming. There are no opportunities to work off the farm. This year at least we are busy with the poppy. One of my sons is now a father, and so can't travel elsewhere. The work we have on the farm is only for one person, but there is nothing for my sons to do off the farm so I keep them here.⁷⁴

Interviews with labourers at gathering points in Faizabad (the nearest significant labour market) reinforced the perception that work was more limited in 2012-13, although there were some conflicting indications. Table 15 presents information provided by labourers on work availability and going wages. While three labourers said that their own situation had improved or remained the same, and reported that wages have remained at previous levels for some types of skilled work, most described a more challenging environment for finding employment and said that their situation was worse this year. (See Box 1.) A partial explanation for the relatively high wages despite the decline in labour demand may be the higher wages prevailing at harvest time (later last year due to the late winter) when the interviews were conducted. Similar to the situation in Balkh described above, WFP data report an increase in the price of wheat flour in April and May 2013 of 36 and 42 percent respectively over the same months in 2012, and that the terms of trade between labour and wheat flour declined by 22 and 26 percent during the same periods.⁷⁵ Respondents who reported that wages were similar to the previous year still focused on the reduced number of days available in 2013. A number of respondents said that they were looking forward to the usual spike in wages during Ramazan, although others said that working during the fasting month was too physically demanding, especially when it fell during the summer months.

⁷⁴ Interview with farmer, Jurm District.

⁷⁵ Initial Market Price Bulletin, May and June 2013.

Table 15: Availability of casual labour and wages, Badakhshan

	May 2012	May 2013
Unskilled		
Days per month (avg)	25	20
Afs per day (avg)	340	340
Afs per day (range)	200-400	300-350
Skilled		
Days per month (avg)	25	20
Afs per day (range)	1,000-1,200	700-1,200

Table note: Based on interviews with casual labourers at gathering sites in Faizabad

Box 1: Situation of casual labourers, Faizabad

Skilled labourer (mason), from Argoo District: Last year I worked 6-7 months. Last year was good—I wasn't unemployed. I was finding work for 25 days per month, then Friday I was going home to Argoo. Last year the daily wage for good masons was 1,000-1,200 Afs. This year it has come down to 700. This year, I find work only about 20 days. Work has reduced; why? There were foreigners at the PRT and there were also NGOs who were busy with them. [Afghan] NGO workers were building their homes or doing some sort of work, so this was employment for us. There is no work in Argoo, so I can't work there. I could do weeding of opium poppy at Argoo, but that is not my specialty. I don't want to go to Kunduz or Kabul to seek work.

Unskilled labourer, from Qarya Jawzan: I've been offering myself as a labourer and coming here to the market daily for the last three years. Labour work is getting less and less each year. Last year, many families and markets in the new city of Faizabad were under construction, and I could easily find work. I was working with one mason. In one month, I was working 26 days (except Fridays). Last year the daily wage was better, up to 400 Afs at this time of year, but this year, it's only 350 per day. Last year, on average, I was making 8,700 monthly. I worked approximately five months at this rate and this level of work. At present, work has become less. I am concerned and am worried. If this continues, at the end of the work season my income will fall. At the end of the harvest, all of the labourers will return to the labour market, and will drive down wages even more. At the end of harvest last year, I was working for 250, because wages were so low. At present, it looks like in the last month I have worked 22 days. In comparison to last year, this is four days less and also the wage is about 50 Afs less. One hope is that during Ramazan the wage will go up and God willing I am healthy and can benefit from the wage of 500 per day.

Unskilled labourer, from Yaftal: Last year was good as a labourer. I was receiving up to 400 Afs per day, while this year the wage is 350. Last year I was working with one masonry contractor for three months on one building and getting 8,500 Afs monthly. The 3-4 other months, I was getting 6,500 - 7,000 Afs. My livelihood was going very well, but my father got sick last fall. I had to take him to Faizabad and Kunduz for treatment, and had to sell my cow for 27,000 Afs to cover the 30,000 Afs medical costs. I borrowed 5,000 Afs from friends and relatives so that I could provide food for my own household. This year I should go to someplace warm so that I can work, such as Kunduz, so that I can bring in a little money and buy another cow. Right now I am drinking shir chay [milk tea, often associated with poverty as a substitute for meat], and so need a cow. The masonry contractor goes to Kunduz each year, and this year he will take me with him. I am hopeful that from this I can get some money and finish my loans and solve the problem of not having a cow.

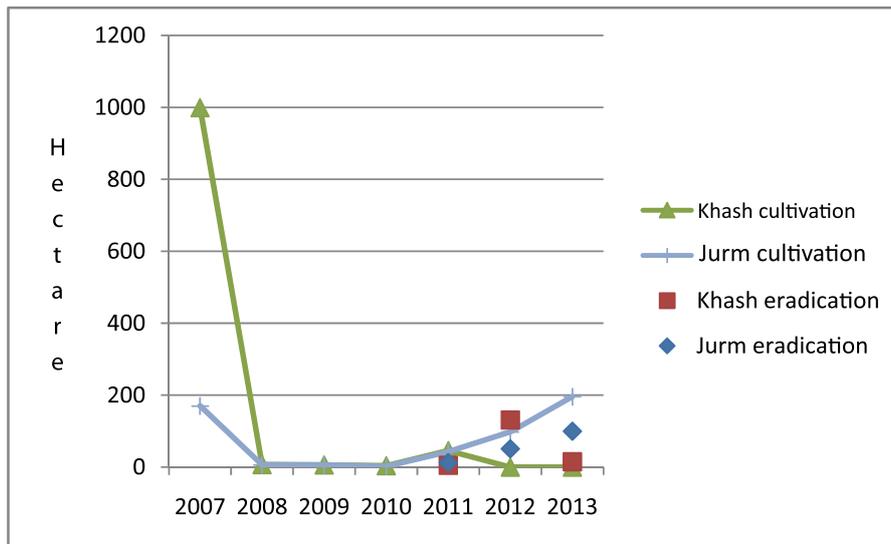
In the midst of indicators of a downturn in the economy, however, opium poppy may be creating increased demand for labour. In Khash, respondents said that women and children are involved in the weeding and harvesting; although they were not capable of doing the lancing of the capsules, they collect the resin. There was said to be no in-migration from other places for the work. In Khash, weeding paid 250-300 Afs per day with two meals, and opium poppy harvesting paid 5-6 *toli* (one *toli* equals 18 grams of opium poppy) per day (1-2 *toli* for women and children). Most labour payments for opium-related work are in opium rather than cash.

5.4 Effects of counter-narcotics activities on levels of cultivation

It is not clear how to reconcile the greatly elevated official eradication figures of the last two years with farmers' reporting of a lack of seriousness of the eradication campaign, at least in Jurm and Khash. As noted above, according to UNODC 1,784 ha opium poppy was eradicated in Badakhshan during 2011-12 and 2,798 ha in 2012-13, increases of nearly 400 percent and 57 percent, respectively. This year's increase ran counter to the overall decrease in eradication. Regardless of the veracity of the figures, fieldwork strongly suggested that physical eradication and the information campaigns were having a minimal effect on levels of cultivation, and that opium poppy was increasing in prevalence and extent. According to very informal estimates, in Jurm the area has doubled since last year, and in some places is now making up 30-35 percent of cultivated land.

Within the surveyed households, individual households' cropping choices were consistent with these observations: the proportion of households who cultivated nearly doubled in 2013, while only two households grew less in 2012-13 than they had the previous year. In Khash almost all of the households grew opium poppy and only one household grew less in 2012-13 than in 2011-12. Individual households' cropping choices are discussed further below. The general sense in the area was that production this year was going to be good, perhaps 10-15 kg per *jerib*. As shown in Figure 2, UNODC/MCN 2013 data are consistent with these observations of increased production for Jurm (196 ha, up from 98 in 2011-12), although not for Khash, where official figures indicated no production in either 2011-12 or 2012-13.

Figure 2: Opium Poppy Cultivation and Eradication in Jurm and Khash



Source: UNODC/MCN, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013." Because of the change in district boundaries in Badakhshan between 2006 and 2007, figures before 2007 are not comparable.

According to both UNODC officials and household respondents in the area, in Khash in 2012 the teams took a bit from everyone; this level of eradication was not considered a problem by farmers. (What might be called "adaptive expectations" is discussed further below.) As noted above, this year the stated target for the teams was 100 percent in Khash. In Jurm, except for one case, eradication in 2013 seemed also to have had the same character as the previous year, which was characterised as *nim kala* (half-hearted, literally "half-headed"). Respondents in the area said that the eradication team didn't want to upset the local population, so did minimal eradication. At one point there was a rocket attack on the eradication team. There was no eradication on the east side of river, which was considered insecure.

Interviews with households in Khash and Jurm indicated that the government's information campaign is definitely getting the counter-narcotics message out, and that farmers were aware of the government's stated policy on opium poppy cultivation and on what the consequences were supposed to be. Respondents noted that they heard the announcements on the radio and occasionally the television, and that in the spring (planting season in Khash) the *woleswal* brings together the heads of the *shuras* and tells them that they should not plant. This year authorities sent a letter to the heads of the *shuras* and religious leaders to try to enlist them in persuading the population not to plant. It was clear from information provided during fieldwork, however, that this was largely a *pro forma* exercise. Most farmers were highly sceptical about the commitment of local leaders to the elimination agenda, especially when they themselves were either involved in or benefitting from cultivation. As one farmer in Khash explained:

I heard about the poppy ban on the radio. The head of the shura also went to the woleswal and heard the woleswal say that you should announce in the mosque that no one should cultivate. He posted a letter on the wall of the mosque. However, people don't accept—there are no other choices for us. And some shura heads are also planting poppy.⁷⁶

76 Interview with farmer, Khash District.

Other respondents said that they are not going to pay attention to the head of the *shura* because the people are poor and there is nothing else that will meet expenses, but also because the heads themselves grow, being part of the village. Typical responses from farmers were “the head of the *shura* goes through the motions, but he is not very serious,” or “I hear from the head of the *shura*, but if they are cultivating, who are they to tell me not to cultivate?” Critically, because heads of the *shura* are elected by the population, they are usually not in a position to go against local wishes; as one farmer noted about the role of the head of the *shura* in reduction, “If he plays a role, he is on the side of the people.”⁷⁷ As one aid agency official from the area put it, “There’s no stigma to cultivation.” In all, respondents characterised the information campaign as “weak,” although it might better be characterised as “ineffective,” as everyone seems to have received the message, but largely ignored it.

Image1: Post-eradication field in Sar-e tal, Jurm District



Image2: Post-eradication field in Chang-e Bala, Jurm District



There appeared to be a near consensus on the three main characteristics of the eradication campaign: 1) eradication would be done only in fields near the road, and that fields away from the road would be safe; 2) where eradication took place, it would be *nim kala*, with only small or token amounts of poppy destroyed; and, 3) those with *wasita* (connections) would not be subject to any eradication at all. Therefore, the net effect of the threat was minimal, as farmers simply do the math and incorporate anticipated (small) eradicated areas into their planning. The following was a very typical statement: “I didn’t grow [opium poppy] last year because I don’t have much land and I thought that the government would eradicate. If I had lost my poppy crop, it would have been a big problem. When I saw that the government was only eradicating a small portion, I decided that I would grow.”⁷⁸ Similarly, another farmer noted that “opium output was good—I didn’t get eradicated too much. I was able to get a good income; they didn’t take enough for it really to make me upset.”⁷⁹ As another farmer put it, “I used to be afraid of the campaign, but last year I saw that they weren’t serious, so I increased this year.”⁸⁰ Photos taken of fields post-eradication bore out the minimal quality of eradication. (See Image 1 and 2.)

The head of one of the two households which did not grow opium poppy but grew wheat and potato on three *jeribs* of land said that he did not have enough land or the capacity to farm additional land, and that he would rather exist on just *nan* [bread] rather than doing something which was *haram* [prohibited by Islam], adding that his wife wouldn’t agree to him growing. The head of the second household, which also had three *jeribs* of land, had a shop in the village, and mentioned that his son worked as a labourer on NGO projects as well as did weeding on other farmers’ opium poppy fields.

77 Interviews (3) with farmers, Jurm District.

78 Interview with farmer, Jurm District.

79 Interview with farmer, Jurm District.

80 Interview with farmer, Jurm District.

Looking at the two households that gave up cultivation in 2012-13, one in Khash appeared to be doing well without opium poppy. The household had a reasonable amount of land (20 *jeribs*), on which it planted vegetables and wheat. The vegetables were sold in the shop which the household owned or was taken to Faizabad. Transport of the vegetables was made easier because about 11 months before the household had purchased two vehicles (Datsun truck and Saracha [station wagon, which can be used to carry goods as well as people]), and had household members who drove the vehicles in order to earn income. The respondent ascribed the positive state of the household economy to these business activities and to unity within the family. It should be noted that this year he began growing one *jerib* of *chars* (intercropped with tomato) and also generated 7,400 Afs of income through the sale of opium which he had produced in 2011-12 and the previous year. He had been untouched by eradication in 2011-12 because his fields were far from the road. The one household in Jurm which gave up cultivation had done so under duress and out of fear of eradication, and was very explicit in his hostility towards the government. (See Box 2.)⁸¹

Box 2: Aggressive eradication in Jurm: an apparent outlier

A 65-year-old farmer who walks with a cane has two *jeribs* of land in Jurm. Last year he grew one *jerib* of poppy and one of mixed alfalfa and orchards. Last spring he was hit by a car while walking in the bazaar, and was taken directly to the hospital in Kunduz, where he remained for nine months. He didn't have any other money, so to pay for the hospital bills he sold off some of the opium saved from the previous year. When the expenses continued for another several months, his son took an emergency loan of 60,000 Afs from relatives and sold the outputs from the orchard to pay for the medical bills. The farmer was looking forward to getting the output from opium poppy so that he could pay off the debts, but then was informed by his son that his field had been eradicated. At first, they had hidden this information from him, but finally they broke the news. When he heard the news, he said that he nearly died. He says that he managed to get a bit less than 1 kg, which he sold for 7,400 Afs, but that without eradication he would have gotten 10 kg. He was at a loss as to what to do. His sons are in school, as are his three daughters. This year he decided not to grow opium poppy out of fear that he would again be eradicated. Instead, he planted the land to wheat. His sons work doing weeding on other opium poppy fields in the village for 300 Afs per day. He thinks he was eradicated because his was the first field the eradication team came across or was the only poppy field in that area, or else because he wasn't there to negotiate and because his sons talked back to the police. He says that those with *wasita* didn't get eradicated, and that "the government doesn't have any job but to skin people alive." He says he may have to mortgage his land to get out of debt.

Other than the one household in Jurm which gave up opium poppy completely, only one household which cultivated opium poppy this year had reduced the area from the previous year. This household reduced area from two to one *jerib*, largely because it had inferior output last year due to late planting, and also because it didn't have the human resources within the household to be able to manage cultivation. The household head was an itinerant peddler who sold goods from the back of his donkey in outlying villages, which often required him to stay away overnight and therefore didn't allow him the time for farming. While his sons currently work on the farm after school, he fears that if demands on the farm increase through the expansion of labour-intensive crops such as opium poppy, his sons will be forced to drop out of school. He has not experienced eradication, largely because last year there was no growth in his fields. The 12 *jeribs* of wheat he planted allow self-sufficiency for the household, and he also grows some clover for the animals and for sale in the Jurm bazaar as well as some vegetables.

Most of the households who maintained cultivation at the same level (11) or who increased cultivation (16) mentioned that their decision was informed by the need to liquidate debt or otherwise solve financial issues on the one hand, and the weak quality of the prior year's eradication on the other. One head of household who had lost to floods a *jerib* of the 4.5 he had cultivated to wheat and the entire one-half *jerib* he planted to opium poppy was forced to sell one of his three cows and take a 20,000 Afs cash loan from relatives for household consumption and his son's expenses at Faizabad University. He noted:

I was hurt from the floods on one side, and on the other side, each year the prices go up and the government doesn't do anything to control them. I am growing opium and my son will be graduating, so perhaps the change will be reversed and life will improve. I have spent a lot of money on him. I am in debt and if I can't finish the debt with poppy, then there is no hope.

⁸¹ UNODC notes that a "major change" was the cessation of opium poppy cultivation due to low yield or plant disease. Nothing similar was mentioned in either of the districts in Badakhshan.

Another respondent reported that he had made a poor decision by taking a loan to purchase a vehicle which for legal reasons could not ply the roads as he had intended to earn income. He had subsequently been forced to incur additional debt and mortgage his land to cover household expenses, and was now growing opium poppy as a sharecropper on his own land in an attempt to pay off the debt and avoid losing his land. He noted that “I am in debt so poppy is the only way out of that debt.”⁸²

Several households cited the belief that “everyone” is growing as a factor in their decision. In fact, it is plausible that there is an element of not wanting to look foolish for abstaining from cultivation while everyone else around them does without serious harm.

Of the nine households who reported significant positive change in their lives, five explicitly attributed this to opium poppy cultivation, with three of those also mentioning potatoes, the other cash crop in the two districts. Four of the nine households also mentioned non-farm employment (e.g. ANA, teachers, labourer), while two mentioned trade or shopkeeping. All eight households who reported significant negative change attributed it to one or more varied shocks to their household, including natural disaster (e.g. floods, crop failure), medical crises, other household crisis, bad business choice, loss of employment or government destruction of house to build a road. Seven of these eight households also reported incurring debt, and six of the seven also reported either distress sales of household assets and/or mortgaging land. Of the eight households experiencing negative change, two maintained opium poppy cultivation at the same level, five increased (including two who started cultivation), and one quit (Box 2 above).

Opium prices are lower than last year: 2,000-3,000 Afs vs. 3,500-5,000 Afs per *paw* at harvest time. The lower prices may be due to traders waiting for the harvest, although some respondents attributed it to the lack of buyers. Several respondents mentioned that these days *jalog* [trader or middleman] are not coming to the villages and towns out of fear of police predation whereby they confiscate opium and sell it themselves; people are also not bringing it to market for the same reason. In Khash, respondents said that at present there was none of the advance payment system known as *salaam*, although a few people take out loans in the form of fertiliser (3,500 Afs per bag of di-ammonium phosphate) and repay in two *paw* of opium at harvest time.

In some villages, field teams saw the presence of some *chars*, which is sown with other crops, including wheat and potatoes (and opium poppy) only during the winter season (unlike in Balkh). Yield per *jerib* was 8-10 *paw* (Kabul) because it was not grown in a concentrated way; if grown by itself, yields might be more in the 30-35 range. Grade 1 *chars* was selling for 4-6,000 per *paw*, Grade 2 2,000 per *paw*, and Grade 3 500 per *paw*.

⁸² Interview with farmer, Khash District. Mansfield describes how cultivation of opium poppy allowed some households in Jurm and elsewhere in Badakhshan to regain land which they had been forced to mortgage during the 2000 drought. See David Mansfield, “Coping Strategies, Accumulated Wealth and Shifting Markets: The Story of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Badakhshan 2000-2003” (Agha Khan Development Network, January 2004).

6. Summary and Conclusions

Fieldwork conducted in May 2013 in four districts in Balkh and Badakhshan provinces produced the following findings.

Balkh

- In Balkh Province, the cultivation of opium poppy remains associated with insecurity and areas beyond firm control of the state. Security in the fieldwork areas of Chimalt and Balkh districts was reported to be improved in 2012-13, especially in Chimalt, due to the deployment of the ALP, although area respondents expressed anxiety about the long-term trajectory of the ALP and whether they will ultimately contribute to insecurity. The role of the ALP in counter-narcotics remains ambiguous.
- The opium poppy eradication campaign going on at the time of fieldwork was described as much more robust than in previous years. The government's information campaign was also seen to be getting the word out, but elders' commitment to suppression was highly variable from village to village, likely dependent on personal relations and negotiations. Despite the eradication and information campaigns, 410 ha of opium poppy was recorded in Chimalt, costing the province the "poppy-free" status it achieved in 2007.
- Amongst a limited sample, three of four households in Chimalt who cultivated opium poppy in 2011-12 increased the amount in 2012-13. None had experienced eradication in 2011-12, but all had this year, although due to the timing of the campaign it was not clear how much opium they had lost.
- Improved security and upgraded roads have led to better market access, although in Chimalt transport costs were said to be high and sale prices low at harvest. In both areas, low harvest prices due to a lack of access to cold storage and market disruptions due to Salang highway blockages were reported as having hurt incomes. Households which had shifted to wheat in 2012-13 cited crop diseases (e.g. watermelon pest) or difficulty getting crops to market as key factors in their decision.
- The cultivation of vegetables expanded noticeably among surveyed households in Chimalt. In Balkh, decreases in vegetable cultivation by households were attributed variously to inability to acquire land, poor yields, more attractive relative prices for cotton, and the difficulty of accessing markets. Most households who reported an improved economic situation attributed it to improved yields and prices from cash crops, as well as to non-farm employment. Those who reported a deterioration in their economic situation attributed it to shocks to the household or the failure of cash crops (e.g. watermelon).
- There was evidence that returns from cash crops had allowed the purchase of productive capital assets such as vehicles and Zaranj which could produce non-farm income.
- Daily labourers interviewed in Mazar reported a decline in wages and in work-days available, which suggests a contraction in the heretofore robust urban economy, especially construction, which has been a source of employment for the unemployed and underemployed rural population. The only exception was a reported increase in the agricultural wage.

Badakhshan

- Unlike in Balkh, in Badakhshan opium poppy cultivation remains dispersed over all or most districts, including the two fieldwork areas of Khash and Jurm.
- Security is highly localised in Badakhshan, but in general has deteriorated in the province, with a number of high-profile attacks, especially in the key area of Warduj. Security in Jurm has deteriorated relative to 2011-12, partly as a function of the situation in neighbouring Warduj. Insecurity is hard to attribute to one factor or another, and is dependent on local conflicts and competition, and the confluence of interests of AOGs, local powerholders, and criminals—amongst which there is overlapping membership.
- According to UNODC/MCN, eradication in the province was greatly expanded in 2012 and again in 2013, with a 57 percent increase in 2013, by far the largest amount of any province. It is hard, however, to reconcile the official eradication numbers with respondents' descriptions of the weak character of the campaign in Khash and Jurm. In fact, the MCN/UNODC final report on eradication noted that the quality of eradication in Badakhshan (and certain other provinces such as Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Nangarhar) was "very poor," with an initial over-reporting of 926 ha (around one-third of the final total). As in Balkh, the information campaign is getting the word out on government policy and the possible consequences of violating it, but there appears to be a lack of commitment of local elders, some of whom were themselves said to be growing and unwilling to go against the wishes of the community. Despite the reported aggressive eradication and information campaigns, cultivation in the province increased by 23 percent in 2012-13, following the previous year's increase of 13 percent.
- In the surveyed areas, the eradication and information campaigns appeared to be having little or none of the intended impact on farmers' behaviour. With only one exception, all respondents reported the "half-hearted" or even token character of eradication, and that fields away from the road and those belonging to those with *wasita* were likely to be skipped altogether. Interviews suggested that farmers had incorporated the expected (minimal) level of eradication into their planting calculations.
- In turn, the main change in cropping choices among the surveyed households was the expansion of area devoted to opium poppy: 27 of 30 households in the two areas had grown, and of the 20 households which cultivated in 2011-12, 17 had either increased or maintained the area sown. Among the 30 households, land devoted to opium poppy had increased by 45 percent. Respondents attributed their decision to the high returns of poppy, lack of other options either in agriculture or in non-farm work, the need to liquidate debt and the tepid quality of the eradication. A number of households mentioned the belief that "everyone" was growing.
- There was also an increase in the number of households growing potato, the other significant cash crop in the area, and the amount of land devoted to it.
- Farmers cited access to markets as a major constraint to growing licit crops, with costs high and produce damaged in transport by animal. This is in addition to more general agricultural constraints in Badakhshan of climate, infrastructure, location and geography.
- Lower opium prices at the village level were blamed largely on the lack of traders willing to purchase, which was in turn attributed to fear of police confiscating (and re-selling) opium.
- Non-farm income remains an important part of the livelihoods picture, although daily labourers in Faizabad and households in the fieldwork areas reported a decline in the availability of work, which was attributed to a reduction in development activities and reduced migration to Iran. Joining the ANA or ANP is still one livelihoods option, although with increasing awareness of the dangers involved. There was evidence that opium poppy cultivation was creating employment in weeding and harvesting (done by both males and females) and lancing.

Implications

While the above findings are idiosyncratic to one year and a limited number of locations, and therefore should not be generalised beyond the immediate fieldwork areas, they may suggest some implications for Afghanistan as a whole. In Balkh, the shift out of opium poppy cultivation from 2007 has been effected by a combination of coercion backed up by force and the availability of non-farm employment in the booming city of Mazar. Both of these factors may be in question in the near future. In fact, Balkh's slipping from the ranks of "poppy-free" provinces for the first time since 2007 may be indicative of the future. At the same time, it will be interesting to see whether the provincial administration builds on what seems to have been a more muscular eradication campaign in 2012-13, motivated either by the desire to regain "poppy-free" status or the wish to discourage any rivals that might be strengthened by resource flows and local political dynamics connected with a resurgent opium poppy economy west of Mazar. In Badakhshan, while the province reported close to zero cultivation in 2007 and there are annual fluctuations in production among the 14 districts, in recent years there seems to have been little serious and concerted effort to suppress cultivation. This apparent *modus vivendi* worked out on eradication along with worsening security suggests that the province is likely to experience further expansion of cultivation.

More generally, it is hard to see any factors which would decrease cultivation in the longer-term, with the possible exception of lower opium prices—which at any rate will be transient. On the security side, the coercion on which much of the suppression has been based will be harder to maintain in the unstable and/or contested environment that is expected to prevail during and after the 2014 security transition. Any further reductions in state reach will almost certainly lead to an increase in cultivation. In the fluid and competitive political environment likely to prevail, including the dynamic introduced by the 2014 presidential elections, it is hard to imagine the motivation, let alone the ability, to impose unpopular policies on communities. In areas dependent on opium poppy cultivation, the Taliban are associated positively with the ability to cultivate. More likely will be deals and bargains that compromise one policy ideal (e.g. counter-narcotics) to achieve another (e.g. security). This is especially likely in areas such as Chimalt where improvements in security are based on the introduction of the ALP, whose loyalty and stability in the longer term is very much in question. The IMU and other regional militant groups may contribute to drug production and trafficking, either as a way to finance their activities or by "free-lancers" that splinter or do drugs on the side. The 24 percent national reduction in reported eradication from 2011-12 may be evidence that the government and the international community are already pre-occupied with other issues.

On the economic side, a national economy which continues to contract due to reductions in international spending and a lack of confidence for investment will produce fewer of the non-farm opportunities in urban areas which have contributed to the livelihoods of many rural households. With fewer opportunities, households will be thrown back on agriculture, which in turn will put pressure on the one crop that in many cases will be the most lucrative under the circumstances, opium poppy. Farmers in water-scarce areas such as the lower ends of Chimalt may also be under pressure from the rising cost of fuel, which encourages them to grow opium poppy, the crop that can recoup tubewell running costs.

Regardless of the ultimate status of the Afghan-US Bilateral Security Agreement, there will inevitably be a reduction in international financial flows, which will in turn lead to reductions in construction and patronage which has produced whatever "sharing" of the wealth has taken place. This could have a number of effects which can lead directly and indirectly to an increase in opium poppy cultivation. With reduced financial flows, there will be a search for resources to maintain patronage (including local irregular forces such as the ALP), which may lead to criminality and more intense competition over licit and semi-licit resources (e.g. informal mining of minerals).

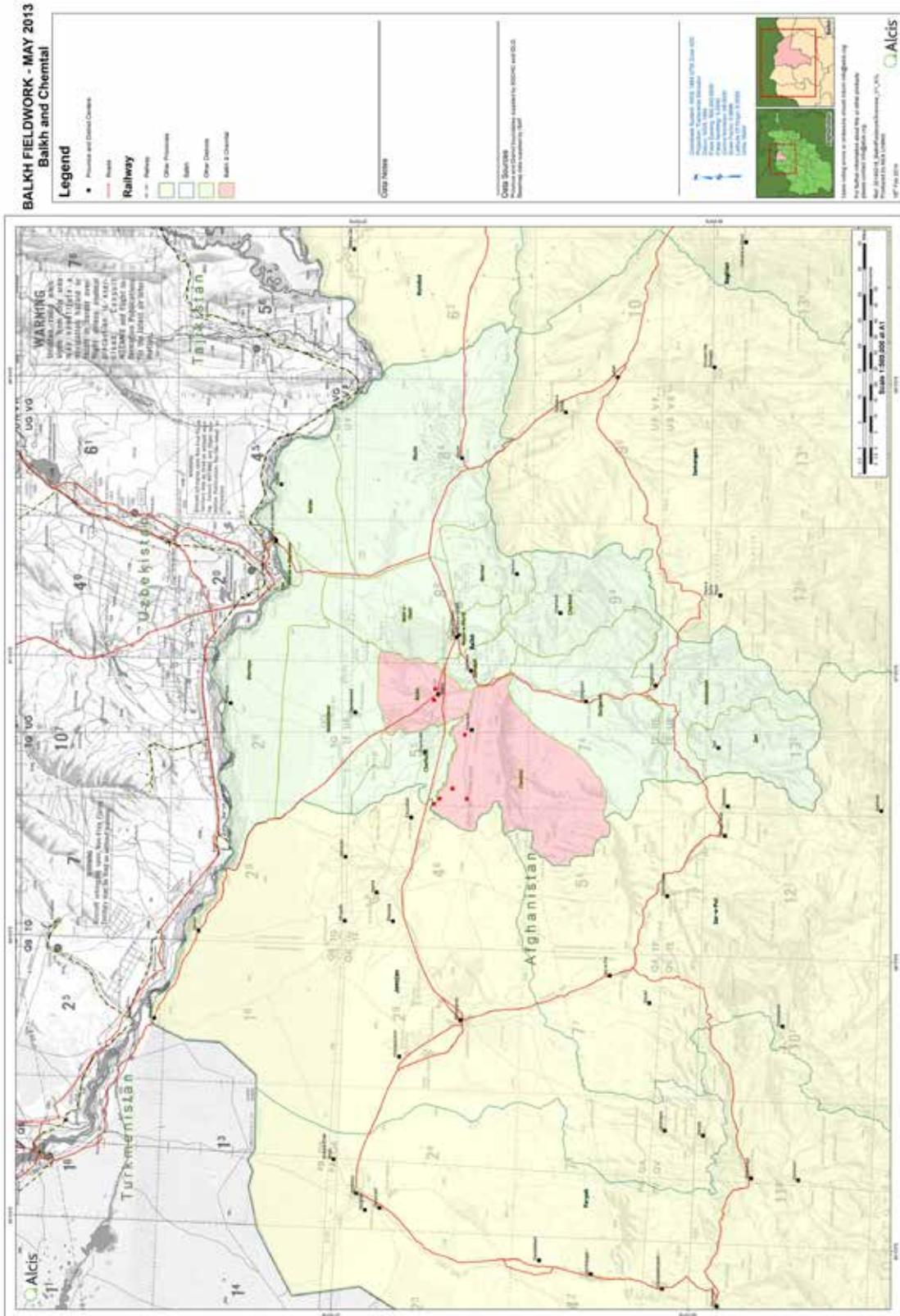
While the northern and central provinces may be less affected by the drawdown than some of the southern and eastern provinces, all areas will be affected by the reduction in direct and indirect spending as well as the reduction in economic activities induced by concerns about political instability.

The other “safety valve” for rural livelihoods—migration to seek employment in Iran and Pakistan—has continued to become less attractive due to the political climate in those destinations as well as the devaluation of the Iranian *toman*, and is likely to deteriorate even further in the event of serious conflict in Kabul or elsewhere.

While the political and security environment described above appears to be an inhospitable one for introducing new policies, especially ones that are not in line with some of the perverse incentives created or increased by the 2014 Transition, nevertheless in many places (e.g. areas of Balkh) there is evidence of increasing market linkages and capital accumulation from the income from cash crops or non-farm employment. To enable households in higher potential, more secure areas with better access to transport, markets, and water to create livelihoods for themselves, institutional and biological impediments to licit market crops should be addressed so as to lower the risk to farmers, who even in the more secure higher potential areas are still at the mercy of crop diseases and pests, road conditions, intermittent security and external markets. The uncertainty of the coming period raises the risk that farmers opt for illicit crops which are not so dependent on market conditions at one point in time.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: Balkh Province



Annex 5: Opium cultivation (2006-2013) and eradication (2012-2013) in Afghanistan (Hectares)

Source: Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013. UNODC and the Ministry of Counter Narcotics. November 2013.

PROVINCE	Cultivation (hectares)								Change 2012-2013 (%)	Eradication (hectares)	
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013		2012	2013
Kabul	80	500	310	132	152	220	120	298	+148%	103	0
Khost	133	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Logar	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Paktya	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Panjshir	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Parwan	124	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Wardak	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Ghazni	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Paktika	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Central Region	337	500	310	132	152	220	120	298	+148%	103	0
Kapisa	282	835	436	P-F	P-F	181	290	583	+101%	54	11
Kunar	932	446	290	164	154	578	1,279	1,127	-12%	70	108
Laghman	710	561	425	135	234	624	877	1,236	+41%	76	20
Nangarhar	4,872	18,739	P-F	294	719	2,700	3,151	15,719	+399%	784	157
Nuristan	1,516	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Eastern Region	8,312	20,581	1,151	593	1,107	4,082	5,596	18,665	+234%	985	296
Badakhshan	13,056	3,642	200	557	1,100	1,705	1,927	2,374	+23%	1,784	2,798
Takhar	2,178	1,211	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	60
Kunduz	102	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
North-eastern Region	15,336	4,853	200	557	1,100	1,705	1,927	2,374	+23%	1,784	2,858
Baghlan	2,742	671	475	P-F	P-F	161	177	141	-20%	252	34
Balkh	7,232	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	410	NA	0	80
Bamyan	17	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Faryab	3,040	2,866	291	P-F	P-F	145	P-F	158	NA	50	7
Jawzjan	2,024	1,085	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Samangan	1,960	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Sari Pul	2,252	260	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	NA	0	0
Northern Region	19,267	4,882	766	P-F	P-F	305	177	710	-301%	302	121
Hilmand	69,324	102,770	103,590	69,833	65,045	63,307	75,176	100,693	+34%	3,637	2,162
Kandahar	12,619	16,615	14,623	19,811	25,835	27,213	24,341	28,335	+16%	922	1,083
Uruzgan	9,703	9,204	9,939	9,224	7,337	10,620	10,508	9,880	-6%	485	352
Zabul	3,210	1,611	2,335	1,144	483	262	424	1,335	+215%	88	0
Day Kundi	7,044	3,346	2,273	3,002	1,547	1,003	1,058	1,536	+45%	236	9
Southern Region	101,900	133,546	132,760	103,014	100,247	102,405	111,507	141,779	+27%	5,368	3,606
Badghis	3,205	4,219	587	5,411	2,958	1,990	2,363	3,596	+52%	53	3
Farah	7,694	14,865	15,010	12,405	14,552	17,499	27,733	24,492	-12%	316	262
Ghor	4,679	1,503	P-F	P-F	P-F	P-F	125	264	+111%	11	6
Hirat	2,287	1,525	266	556	360	366	1,080	952	-12%	600	77
Nimroz	1,955	6,507	6,203	428	2,039	2,493	3,808	16,252	+327%	148	120
Western Region	19,820	28,619	22,066	18,800	19,909	22,348	35,109	45,557	+30%	1,130	468
Total (rounded)	165,000	193,000	157,000	123,000	123,000	131,000	154,000	209,000	+36%	9,672	7,348

Notes: P-F = "poppy free." A province is defined as poppy-free when it is estimated to have less than 100 ha of opium cultivation. Due to administrative boundary changes and availability of satellite imagery, in a small number of cases provincial estimates are not comparable between certain years. For more information on such cases, see original document.

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Phone: +93 (0) 799 608 548

Email: areu@areu.org.af

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