

LOCAL GOVERNANCE & COMMUNITY-DRIVEN INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE DELIVERY IN AFGHANISTAN: A DISCUSSION PAPER¹

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

The CDDP mission has been tasked by government to lay out the basic concept of a community driven development project. In doing this it has also had to propose elements of a broader strategy for improving local governance and community-driven development in Afghanistan.

This paper addresses this second goal and is in 3 parts: Section A sets out some underlying considerations, principles and comparative experience; Section B builds on this and suggests a possible and very schematic future scenario for improved local governance and infrastructure and service delivery, to provoke discussion; Section C suggests roles and options for external programme assistance - including the CDDP itself - to help achieve this.

In brief, this paper provides some additional elements of a strategy that allows synergy between the “bottom up” and “top down” approach at the local and district levels. Government is committed both to ensure effective, sustainable delivery of the full range of local community and public infrastructure and services required for recovery and development, and also to move towards a more accountable and democratically controlled state at local level and, specifically, to support the District administration.

A key part of this will be (a) the introduction of bottom-up consultative local planning procedures linking Villages and Districts, whereby the comparative advantages in basic infrastructure/service delivery of each level are leveraged; (b) the establishment of block grant funding mechanisms for both these levels – this, in turn, both as key to effective and efficient planning, also to weaken vertical patron-client relations. For this to succeed, (c) there is need not only for basic capacity building at Village and District levels, but also for Institutional Development – notably, for arrangements to bring community representation to bear on planning and resource management, for greater accountability and transparency at District level. It is proposed to trial District Development Committees charged with planning, management of block grant resources, oversight of plan implementation, and overall liaison with government administration – this would be focused initially in a sample of Districts where the administration is deemed to be under control of the central authorities. The DDC would be supported in this by a small District unit of the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction & Development, whose role would be to support the DDCs and Village organisations in planning, to facilitate out-sourcing and liaison with other line departments, and for financial management on behalf of the DDCs. This District support would thus complement and strengthen the parallel activities proposed at Village level, though it would proceed on a much slower track, subject to close monitoring.

There is both need and opportunity for this parallel District support. The range of infrastructure and services needed for reconstruction and development will not emerge from Village planning alone. In turn, effective Village planning and infrastructure delivery inevitably requires support from and coordination by District authorities. While Sector programmes will finance District-level investments, if these are not accompanied by attention to effective, accountable planning, management and monitoring at that level, their effectiveness will be greatly compromised. Conversely, by providing resources to a more accountable body at District level, the legitimacy and credibility of government in the rural areas will be enhanced. In the more distant future, these arrangements, after careful trialing, could be the embryo of more formal, legally sanctioned elected District councils, as bottom tier in a decentralised fiscal system.

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A. SOME UNDERLYING CONSIDERATIONS, PRINCIPLES & COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY-GOVERNMENT INTERACTION AT LOCAL LEVEL

“We foresee the transformation of Afghanistan into a trusted state with an efficient, flexible and transparent government that is accountable to the citizens of Afghanistan ... [and] a well developed civil society with democratic institutions .. “
“While rebuilding the state is our central focus, our goal is a system of governance where people are the principals and government the agent of citizenry, who actively participate and engage in building democratic institutions.”²

General Remarks

Building good local governance requires support to both citizen and community organizing capacities, and to the management and administration capacities of the Government; but **also to the interaction** between them – especially at the **local level**. There are several reasons for this:

- Government itself, and its various **service delivery and poverty targeting** activities, will be more accountable and transparent, and also **more effective**, the greater its interaction with communities and civil society.
- Conversely, the emergence of interest-based, inter-ethnic **civil society** groups (as opposed to more traditional community groups) itself is more likely, the greater the scope for interaction with the state and for influence over state policies and resource allocation. Experience suggests that people are much more willing to spend time and energy on this associational activity where there are opportunities for lobbying and influence over local officials and where there is likelihood that these officials have something to offer.
- It is at the local, **District level** in the rural areas, where 85% of Afghan citizens live, where there is greatest **scope** for interaction between people and the state – and where, given the often reported problems of elite capture³, there is also greatest **need** to reform the procedures and institutions governing this interaction.

Ultimately, the goal of building legitimate democratic institutions and a responsive state at the local level succeeds or fails according to the quality and intensity of this interaction, the satisfaction by people as to the quality of government performance, and their sense that they have had a voice in this.

Local Afghan Realities

Afghan society is a mosaic of different ethnic and linguistic groups. The last 23 years of war and the absence of socio-economic development have produced a vast array of survival and economic strategies among communities. As a result, communities have adopted necessary short term organizational strategies that reflect the political and economic realities of a day-to-day quest for survival. However, some communities as a result of persecution by the Taliban, have rallied around strong leadership and have developed socio-political hierarchies in their communities reflecting, a degree of cohesion that is atypical of Afghan society. Examples of such development may include Panjsher and Shomali regions and parts of Hazarajat. Others have not only remained politically marginal but have lost significant abilities not only to organize themselves but have fallen below accepted norms of poverty, which even by Afghan standards are considered to be severe.

² Excerpt from Chairman Karzai's Tokyo speech

³ Although, without minimizing the severity of this problem in Afghanistan, the allegation of “elite control or bias” in local government affairs is one heard in all countries. Elites of course have equally preferential access to decision-making and resource allocation at the centre as well, and often in even more covert ways.

Even within the latter groups which comprises mostly Pushtun communities and some communities in the northern parts of Afghanistan, the patterns of social cohesion have been adversely affected by the predatory nature of response to economic opportunities. The introduction of economic resources for non-developmental purposes has clearly contributed to the fragmentation of communities and their ability to organize economic life in ways they have been able to do so in the past.

A key feature of many communities in Afghanistan includes ability to intermeditate between themselves and other parties. With the increased competition between political elites within communities, and the absence of capacity to intermeditate, the fair distribution of economic resources is being severely challenged and is a cause of concern for many communities as they attempt to rebuild their lives.

Any community-driven programme, while focusing on the immediate access of resources to communities down stream, will have to increasingly grapple with the reduced intermediation capacity of the communities it wishes to serve. Key to supporting such an effort will be the intermediation role of the district and the central governments in ensuring a credible and transparent system. The tradition of government playing a role in intermediating between communities has a long history and if properly capacitated can serve an important function in ensuring that resources do not contribute to further divisiveness within communities. This role for government would also further its programme to promote legitimate activities, ensuring that non-legitimate activities are further marginalized.

The relationship between communities and the district administration tend to be, on the whole, an organic one. While people are familiar with each other, attempts by members within the larger community to politically align themselves with one or another set of elites is seen as practical and necessary. Community members who are marginalized economically tolerate some degree of political expediency, insofar as it may result in opening of economic opportunity. This “adaptive” capability can be viewed as one conduit through which communities can find access to services at the district level supported by the central government. However, it presumes a level of support and commitment to targeted capacity development of the district level. The traditional role of district officials in Afghanistan has and continues to reflect the centrality of security as a major pre-occupation of the provincial authorities. While that role is likely to continue in one form or another, the appointment of a “development” or “reconstruction” agent that is able to guide communities, within the district, to access service from a range of service providers is crucial.

The role of the district, in acting as an “economic agent of change,” in providing information to communities, may result in new opportunities to channel investments back to the same communities. The definition and identification of capacity, to enable the district level authorities to become “economic brokers” and or “facilitators” would constitute an innovation that would further enhance synergies of investment, both at the community level and provide economic access to “know how” and services at the district level. Such brokers can play an important key role in promoting the economic agenda of the communities within and outside of the district. For example, the district officers would identify markets for communities to sell and promote their products and services. District facilitators, would also be an important conduit for the development of critical economic information, on opportunities at the provincial level. A compelling argument can be made that much of the rural areas of Afghanistan while suffering from chronic poverty, is so, in part because of the absence of information about economic opportunity. Typical farms in rural areas cannot support a burgeoning population and the labor surplus often finds itself searching for work in urban areas or migrating to neighbouring countries.

DISTRICT LEVEL ORGANIZATION AND CAPACITY

The intervening years of war and economic paucity has forced many communities to organize not only at the village and community level but also at the level of district. As mentioned earlier in the paper the organizational capability of the various communities reflects their objective political realities in which they find themselves. If organizational formation is a

strategy to avoid predation and elite capture, it may also serve the added purpose of identifying planning needs and implementation of Block Grants at the community level.

The variations in social organizations in Afghan society can be clearly discerned from looking at the relationship between a community's ability to support a mosque and those who cannot. As families expand so do villages. If there is sufficient surplus in the community the community as a first rule will build a mosque essentially demarcating itself from the other congregations. This pattern of demarcation is universally practiced in Afghanistan. To the extent that such demarcations are self-conscious entities their role in the definition of community becomes self-evident. On a recent trip to the Shomali plains and from information from villages in Kandahar respectively, in Tutumdara and Sinzeray area, people defined their community of interest in relation to their mosques. When communities were queried in Tutumdara they responded by saying that their community consisted of 17 mosques and in Sinzeray of 69 mosques. In areas where communities do not articulate such distinctions, usually, is a telling sign of the level of poverty and the absence of the sense of a community of interest and representation.

The internal structure of communities varies from region to region. For example the CDDP may encounter in many Pushtun communities the following layered structures of community organization: At the village level an elder's council (Spin Zheray Jirga); at the village cluster that represent the extended kinship group (Khel); at next level the area Shura or (Mantaqa Shura) and finally the district level Shura. One reason for the relatively elaborate organizational set up has much to do with ensuring that resources are not arbitrarily assigned and that communities are assured their share of assistance. In such a situation it could be argued that the need for the intermediation facility at the district Shura and the presence of the district capacity could ensure transparency in allocation of resources. Since all allocation meetings would be made in public including the announcement of the Block Grant, the customary open and egalitarian processes to ensure intermediation at the district level would be acceptable to the community representatives.

Other variations in local Shura's size and clusters of village do exist but they tend to be of roughly similar nature at the district level. This is true of most areas of Afghanistan such as Herat, Kandahar, Paktia, Mazar, Kunduz, Ningarhar, and regions in the southwest. But clearly the sophistication of the organization and representational structure reflects both the underlying economic conditions and knowledge base of the communities - isolated communities, economically much poorer than others in the rest of the country, display weaker institutional adaptations and use of community organizing principles. Sufficient planning capacity must exist to assist communities to plan for the Block Grants.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE/SERVICE PLANNING & FINANCING STRATEGY

Community-driven service delivery should be undertaken through constructive interaction between communities, Villages and District authorities. The implications need to be thought through – first by examining the comparative advantages of these two levels, then the consequences for local planning and financing.

Strengths & Weaknesses of Different Levels

If the local Administration or Village/community agencies in Afghanistan are to perform the role of "infrastructure and service planner/financer" what are their comparative advantages? The following is a schematic summary of their strengths and weaknesses, noting that some are **inherent**, while some **location-specific or temporary**:

	STRENGTHS TO LEVERAGE	CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS
VILLAGE & COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater scope for local collective action and accountability, and easier/transparent decision-making and rule enforcement; • Supposedly greater legitimacy and probity of shura and/or potential new institutions; • Greater sense of ownership • Probable rapidity of action (within tech limits and local planning horizon – see below); • Greatest awareness of needs (at least for “local problems”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inherently very modest planning horizon (<1,000 pop), thus with bias to only very local/community investments; • Delink from gov’t budget, thus unable to ensure staff/recurrent budget allocations; • Very limited own “supply capacity” except for very basic investments; • Weak linkage with Gov’t • In some places, Village bodies “captured”; • In some places, weak/lack correlation between Village & community; • In some places, difficult access to outside priv/gov/NGO expertise.
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider Planning area for “intermediate” inter-Village type investments (see below); • Some (future) MRRD and other line dept presence, hence: technical skills and also some staff/budget control; • Scope for coordination & arbitration between various Village needs/interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits to inter-District planning horizon • Lack of mechanisms for dialogue with Villages/communities; • Weak/no accountability mechanisms to public for performance; • Weak horizontal coordination between depts. for planning; • Lack staff, equipt, training, experience. • Tendency to elite capture • Lack of legal framework for District government

Determining Levels of Local Planning/Financing Authority: Subsidiarity in Practice

Precisely because of some of the inherent weaknesses noted above, and while obviously wanting to encourage the maximum local flexibility and discretion, certain limits will need to be imposed at each level depending on the characteristics of different types of investments. This is because a local planning system which is **limited** to Village-level planning (essential as this is as the first step in a bottom up process) is neither (a) desirable nor (b) practical because of:

- The Spread or diffusion of likely beneficiaries. Experience suggests that, for obvious reasons of **local interest**, if asked to prioritise within a fixed budget, a Village or community will emphasise intra-Village priorities (access roads, community economic schemes, village water supply, etc.) and will under-emphasise or neglect priorities of the wider “inter-Village community” (inter-Village roads, large irrigation schemes, District health facilities, large primary or secondary schools, student hostels etc.). It is less likely still that priority will be given to services – such as vaccination, or crop protection - benefiting an even more diffuse and unpredictable set of beneficiaries

The obvious point is that there are “spheres” of “community interest”, many of which are quite wide and larger than a Village “community of place”.

The flipside to this point is also that it is generally unrealistic and inequitable to expect local voluntary community labour to implement more public schemes which will benefit a much wider and more diffuse set of beneficiaries (and investment implementation guidelines must be clear on this point).

- Operation & maintenance burden and staff/recurrent budget implications. It is not practical nor sustainable to expect Village authorities to take **final** planning decisions on investments which require government staff or recurrent budget allocations for their long run operation and maintenance (e.g. new schools or health posts). Experience suggests that delinking planning and government budgeting for such investments is a recipe for wasted investment.

Given these considerations there will be need to develop (inter-related) layers of final responsibility – or “planning approval menus” - for the planning of the various types of local infrastructure and service needed for Afghanistan’s recovery and development. The following is merely to provoke discussion:

Village level	District level
<p>Features: Few beneficiaries – intra-Village Well-defined geographic area Few implications for spatial planning usually simple technology usually maintained by community</p> <p>lower cost self-help labour usually provided by beneficiaries</p> <p>Illustrative Menu for Approval Authority: “Collective” agric/productive investments Training events Community loan revolving funds Micro-grants for vulnerable groups New/rehab water supply Rehabilitation/equipping Primary Education & Health facilities with no recurrent budget/staff implications Village access, tracks, trails, culverts</p>	<p>Features: many beneficiaries – Inter-Village/District wider geographic area spatial planning required usually more complex technology usually require staffing/operation/maintenance by govt usually higher cost Self-help labour difficult to organise on fair basis</p> <p>Illustrative Menu for Approval Authority: New Primary Education & Health facilities with recurrent budget/staff implications Large inter-Village irrigation schemes Inter-Village Catchment protection works Secondary Education & Health facilities Inter-village/District roads, bridges</p>

It must be stressed again that this is a medium term picture. In the **immediate phase**, under CDDP (see C. below), or at least until District capacities are built up it is likely that:

- Village investment proposals which **do** entail either budget/staff implications for line departments or wider consequences for other Villages will need some more ad hoc review and clearance at a higher level.
- Informal District-level or inter-Village consultative procedures to generate planning proposals for investments of wider benefit must be improvised.

Need for Integrated Local Planning Process

A second and related implication from these considerations is that it is neither (a) desirable nor (b) practical to build up a Community Planning Process which is separated from planning and budgeting at District and Province levels. What is needed is an **iterative Local Participatory Planning Process** as basis for interaction and dialogue between these levels within which the community/Village level is the source of needs and priorities, and has some plan approval authority (as indicated in the “menu” above), but where the District has its role too. There are several reasons for this:

- As suggested above, despite its many strengths, the community/Village has inherent limitations as a planning unit, and will lead to a **bias** to very local, small-scale investments (however well implemented and managed) – neglecting other important local public investments (see Box at end of this Section on Nepal and Bangladesh experience). Further, a delink of community/Village planning from budgeting and staff deployment by the District/Province will **compromise sustainability**;
- Conversely, whatever planning is undertaken at District (and, ultimately, Province) level will be made much **more effective and accountable** if it is fed by a bottom up process of needs identification originating in community/Village, and monitored by the latter. District plan and budget decisions can then be based on real, local specific information about community needs, variations in conditions or opportunities which are quiet unknown to District officials themselves.

- This last point is all the more important given the “**sector programmes**” to be funded by donors – in education, health, water, roads .. A large portion of these programmes will be allocated to Province and District-level expenditures. The success of these sector programmes will be greatly enhanced if they are guided by a bottom-up Local Participatory Planning Process; conversely, experience suggests that they will all too easily fail and waste resources if they are not.

Experience from several countries (Vietnam, Cambodia, Uganda, Mozambique, Nicaragua) suggests that the sort of iterative bottom up planning process suggested, linking communities to local government bodies, is both feasible and is more efficient and equitable than either top down planning procedures or narrowly-based community-planning procedures.

Block Grant Financing to Match Each Planning Level: the Advantages

““Block grants would be distributed to villages and districts, and allocated to projects through inclusive and participatory processes and on the basis of simple criteria.””⁴

Definitional Note: A Block Grant is a budget allocation allocated to a local government or community authority which is (a) a known but fixed amount based on a transparent population-based formula, (sometimes weighted by other variables) , (b) communicated before the priority setting/planning/budgeting decisions at that level, (c) for local discretionary use within an agreed range of investment types or , at least, exclusion boundaries, (d) managed under the authority of that local authority (rather than by, say, a line department).

In order to implement a planning and delivery system as outlined above, ultimately each planning level – Village and District - needs a budget allocation. International experience points to great advantages for Block Grant Financing and it is very good to see this recognized in Government policy. There are key advantages to this sort of mechanism, technical and political, as compared to conventional ad hoc centre-local funding arrangements:

The Problems in Usual Centre-Local Funding Arrangements:

- Introduction of participatory planning procedures in the absence of a clear fund allocation usually leads soon to local apathy and disengagement if there are no certain resources to allocate (as many purely technical assistance, NGO and “social mobilization” projects have demonstrated).
- But in the absence of a clear fund “constraint” there is no incentive for real local prioritization at the planning level concerned, and planning degenerates into wish lists and inflated investment costings.
- Tightly earmarked funding (typical of vertical, line department funding mechanisms and top down sector programmes), with no local discretion often results in mismatch of expenditure with local needs and duplication of effort with those of other local actors (even within the same sector).

By contrast, there are major advantages in Block Grant funding of planning levels:

- With block grants, the degree of local discretion – which can be gradually widened as local capacities are developed - allows local choice and thus better match with locally determined needs.
- Provision of a known but limited allocation is a spur both to efficient project design and implementation, and to mobilization of additional local matching resources.
- The formula-based allocation reduces suspicions of political favouritism and undercuts clientilism, and the tendency for local officials to lobby their patrons in the Province, Region or at the Centre (a typical feature of regimes where centre-local funding is “elastic”).

Incentives - an important added Advantage:

Finally, experience in several countries (Uganda, Bangladesh, Mali ..) also suggests that a Block Grant funding mechanism can be geared to provide incentives for capacity building and compliance with broader national policy objectives, through establishment of conditions of

⁴ Chairman Karzai, *ibid.*

access and upward or downward adjustments in the allocation formula. There are two types of incentive mechanism which can be established:

- **Minimum Conditions of Access** - Simple pre-conditions of access can be set up and agreed. MC compliance to be reviewed x weeks/months before block grant announcement so that targeted remedial support can be deployed. Key to this is prior agreement and communication to local public. Examples: (a) local committees in place as per guidelines; (b) trained accountant in place ... (c) in future years, past accounts reconciled, etc..
- **Performance Criteria** -“Policy goals” can be encouraged through simple top-ups (eg +20% .. and/or sanctions, -20%) to the basic block grant. Simple indicators need to be devised/negotiated and ex-post performance reviewed toward the end of each cycle, prior to the next. Examples: (a) past performance in reintegrating refugees, (b) past success in ensuring a pro-poor planning process/outcomes, (c) past effectiveness of O&M arrangements established.

Key to the success of such mechanisms is, first, prior agreement on the rules of the game, second, an independent monitoring mechanism, and, third, wide public information so that people can bring pressure to bear on local officials.

ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, COORDINATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT DISTRICT LEVEL

“Such a program would allow legitimate leaders to deal with issues facing their communities and to form the basis for consultative democracy in the future.”⁵

Clearly, setting up an integrated Local Planning Process and Block Grant financing mechanism is not simple, and is not a simply technical affair – it requires introduction of capacities and mechanisms for local accountability, transparency and coordination – and, in turn, for citizen representation - especially at District levels, if it is to work.

The District administration is centrally appointed and, currently, does not expect to be accountable to the local population. The most effective way to change this is through introduction of some form of representative body at this level, to bring the voice of communities to bear on planning and implementation of infrastructure and services and, generally, on local government staff performance.

This is not to naively advocate the immediate creation of formal structures of devolution and statutory elected local government. Clearly this could only be the outcome of a national political process and considerable internal debate.

However, interim informal arrangements can be trialed. This might initially be an informal ad hoc District Development Committee (shura), comprised of Village representatives but of a manageable size, meeting periodically to review, discuss and approve District plans and budgets, and to oversee and monitor District plan implementation; they would also act as conduit for mobilizing (future) District technical officials to support Village planning and plan implementation. DDC members would be bound to report back to Villages/communities. Ultimately, after trialing, monitoring and debate, this sort of experience could be the basis for creating a more formal elected District council with real powers over local staff and a budget. This itself would be a key future step in further democratizing the state (experience from Cambodia is relevant – see Box overpage).

These District bodies may also be able to delegate representatives to interact with the Province administration, and at least advise on Province planning issues – ultimately, creating a more formal elected Provincial local government body (although it is recognized that currently this issue is certainly politically problematic in Afghanistan).

⁵ Chairman Karzai, *ibid.*

LESSONS FROM SOME OTHER EXPERIENCES

Cambodia - local trialing as basis for later policy and legislation

- From some initial post-conflict planning work based on community PRA, from which the problems deriving from community-Government disconnect became apparent, CAREERE devised a more integrated planning process, and built up tiers of ad hoc “elected” Development Committees at Village, Commune and Province levels in selected Provinces – with no formal legal framework.
- Needs assessment was instituted at Village level, proposals reviewed, appraised, and – after dialogue with communities – finalized and approved by CDCs within their block grant allocations (or, for more strategic proposals, sent up to PDCs, also recipients of block grants); approved schemes then implemented by community groups themselves.
- After 5 years, the positive experience of the CDCs has led to this body being transformed by law into an elected Commune authority, with Village councilors representing their communities, with own staff and budget, and service responsibilities, and the integrated local planning process inserted in the national regulatory framework.
- There were certainly initial problems with local headmen and some Province Governors. However, the institution of open discussion at and around the Development Committees, public information on budgets and fund allocations, and clear rules and criteria for decision-making, have very considerably defused this.
- Thus, after a few years of necessary “re-centralisation” of political authority and finances, Cambodia has been able to decentralize by statute after informal interim trialing of approaches.

Bangladesh & Nepal – community “demand” is not enough

- In both countries, UNDP instituted a “social mobilization” programme at community level to plan and to promote “demand” for improved government services. However, in both countries it soon became apparent that this planning was biased to very local group economic ventures, with little focus on social or public infrastructure of wider interest; further, it was also clear that equal focus was needed on the ability of local government to “supply” (finance, plan, implement) these latter goods and services. Hence attention switched to a more balanced approach, with capacity building and block grants to local government authorities.
- Especially in Bangladesh these bodies (though also village groups) are prey to elite capture. Two strategies are showing some results. First, an integrated planning process where proposals are vetted publicly by Union Development Committee, with wider stakeholder representation, allied with clear, publicized criteria and guidelines, and a public information campaign; second, block grants to Union Councils tied to clear, public conditionalities and performance incentives.

B. BUILDING LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DELIVERY SYSTEM IN AFGHANISTAN

FUTURE ROLES IN INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE PROVISION & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

It helps to start with a picture of the **long term future**, and then to examine what is required for achieving that goal.

	INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE PROVISION ROLES		BROADER LOCAL GOVERNANCE: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
	LOCAL PLANNING PROCESS	IMPLEMENTATION & MANAGEMENT	
VILLAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entry and base of LPP: Identification of all needs & priorities Approval of “V menu” proposals (within V grant ceiling) Forwarding others to D & dialogue with D on these Involvement in deciding details of all approved proposals (siting, design ..) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “client” role in implementing “V” and some “D” menu investments: (a) s/contract or agreement with priv/NGO/gov’t or (b) direct implementation by V/community agency management & maintenance of “V” investments, with own labour and funds management of all intra-V economic activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management/reg of common intra-V natural resources (water, pasture ..), dispute resolution, etc.. Providing representation to ad hoc inter-V interest bodies to manage inter-V resources, etc. V-based representatives to a District Dev Cttee which engages/monitors D administration
DISTRICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to V planning process (facilitation, tech options, costing, ..) Appraisal/approval of proposals from V which are on “D menu”, within D budget/grant ceiling Securing line dept budgets or staff Forwarding other proposals to P Dialogue with V and P 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support for implem. of some types of V investment Client role in implementing some D (esp inter-V or more tech. complex) investments; Management and maintenance of D investments (often with V or C) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal District Dev’t Cttee to oversee D admin and ensure link to communities (ie forerunner of a District council) management/reg of inter-V natural resources, dispute resolution, etc; Providing representation to ad hoc inter-D interest bodies to manage inter-D resources/interests.
PROVINCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to V and D planning process (facilitation, tech options, costing ..) Securing line dept budgets or staff Other proposals to/dialogue with Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for implem. of some types of V and D investment Client role in implementing some P investments Management & maintenance of P investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-DDC consultative body to advise P admin

Notes: LPP = Local Planning Process; V = Village, D = District, P = Province.

The picture above outlines Infrastructure and Service planning/financing (“provision”) roles. As far as possible actual implementation (“production”) by each level should be undertaken through contract to private firms and/or NGOs. That said, in some (more remote) areas and for some types of technical service (e.g. irrigation system or culvert design) there may be no realistic alternative to government staff at District or Province levels.

A FIRST QUALIFICATION: RECOGNISING LOCAL CONTEXT VARIATIONS

The picture above is simplistic, even as a medium/long term scenario, and even after capacity building, staff deployment, etc, to different levels. There cannot be a “one size fits all” approach since there are **major variations** within Afghanistan (highlighted under Section A. above) as regards, for example:

- The degree of Community/Village correspondence;
- Traditional arrangements for representation, decision-making or collective action on matters of common interest;
- Education levels and receptiveness to new ideas;
- The population sizes of Villages and Districts;
- The areas of Villages and Districts and the ease of travel within;
- The annual calendar of seasonal tasks.

This means that certain features of the scenario outlined above will need to be **tailored and trialed**. To illustrate:

- Very small villages – or Districts - may be assigned a more limited sphere of planning approval authority than very large villages – or Districts;
- The timing of LPP consultation steps must be geared to both local seasonal workload constraints and to the time needed to reach different community groups;
- Procedures for establishing representative bodies at District level should build on local precedent, and on procedures considered legitimate and fair by local standards.

That said, it would not be practicable to introduce too great a variety of arrangements.

A “TYPICAL” PROVINCE: POSSIBLE FUTURE ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE DELIVERY

Within the Scenario outlined above – and not forgetting the need for “context variations” – what might the organizational setup look like? The following is a suggestive skeleton, again as a basis for discussion and development.

	Organisation & Composition	Role
PROVINCE	<p>Possible inter-DDC Coordinating body (DDC delegates from all Districts)</p> <p>Province Support & Training Team Project staff person + PDRRD, other line dept staff, NGOs</p>	<p>Coordination between Districts & facilitation links with Province line depts</p> <p>Train/backstop District Support teams, oversee & facilitate implementation</p>
DISTRICTS	<p>District Development Committee (DDC) Village representatives & elected Chair</p> <p>DDC Secretariat/technical unit (DDRRD)</p> <p>District Support Team (DDRRD, NGOs)</p>	<p>Dialogue with Villages on LPP, approve D plan/budget from “menu”, integrating funds, oversee & support implementation, dialogue with District Administration, conduit with D line staff, report to Villages</p> <p>Support DDC – project appraisal/preparation; daily interface with line depts; call-on government services from Province level; some procurement & liaison with NGOs; financial management on behalf of DDC</p> <p>Direct Support Villages for LPP and implementation (where priv sector/NGOs not available)</p>
VILLAGES	<p>Village Shura and/or Development Committee</p> <p>Community Organisations</p>	<p>Oversee village planning, prepare V plan from “menu”, oversee implementation, upward monitoring</p> <p>Input to LPP, procurement & implementation, upward monitoring</p>

Notes: PDRRD = Provincial Dept of Rural Reconstruction & Development; DDRRD = District Dept of Rural Reconstruction & Development; LPP = Local Planning Process

ROLE OF THE MRRD

As the setup above suggests, a critical question in assuming a broader strategy of investment at the both the community and district level is the role of the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD). Most sector Ministries are unlikely to develop the capacity to provide critical services in the immediate term to the district level communities. And assuming they do, it is unlikely to in an integrated manner. The mandate of the MRRD is a ready fit to serve the needs and technical requirements of the district and specifically of the community. The MRRD is the only agency within the government to have virtually integrated all the sector competencies of the various line ministries. A natural evolution of sector Ministries future roles would assume, that they set standards for sector practice nationally. The MRRD would translate those standards in its integrated approaches and activities with the private sector and NGOs, in implementing planned community objectives.

The MRRD would need to be appropriately capacitated, to in the first instance support the Bloc Grant scheme as the advisor of choice to both community and district level planning and to ensure that quality standards are jointly monitored by the community representative, MRRD and the district official. The inclusion of the MRRD as one of many service providers, would allow it to attenuate its role as a quality monitor, coordinator of activities in various regions and its importance in reporting progress on provincial and national development programmes to Government planners and policy makers.

ROLE OF THE DISTRICT

The district level organization whether a district administration or a Shura is key in assuming some responsibility and ownership for certain planning functions and intermediation roles.

The district level structure must reflect the objective needs and capacities of the community that it wishes to serve. But it can not do this if it is to be under resourced and is seen as a player in the margins and occasionally called upon to mediate disputes, but not having a say in the broader debate in the development of the community which it is a part. The role of the district is complementary to that of the community and certainly not a substitute for it. The building and rehabilitation of a community center where the district and community can gather will have an enormous symbolic value to underpin the government commitment to the “bottom up” approach. Similarly, the district should have a parallel capacity to act on behalf of the community to negotiate and attract investment for the community. To do this it will need to have means and accountability systems so the community feels that its work is being carried out in a direct and meaningful manner.

A key integrating mechanism in bringing the work of the community closer to that of the district is the introduction of community facilitators both at the community and at the district level. The simultaneous task of training and sensitizing both communities (at whatever level of organization) would allow the development of complementarities between the planning capacity and the district and the community. This is crucial for three reasons: Firstly that it allows a coherent set of development values, scale, expectation and understanding of the communities needs by the district level actors. Secondly, to allow for the district planning process to reflect both upwards and downwards community needs not covered by the Bloc Grants. And lastly, to ensure that experiment in participatory planning between the communities and district officials reflect the compact between citizens and its government and is seen to contribute to the creation of a representative democratic polity.

PLANNING, FINANCING & CAPACITY BUILDING: THE SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

To achieve the setup outlined above will require **sequenced support** to Planning, Financing and Capacity Building and the trialing of Institutional Innovations of the sort outlined earlier. Clearly, this is not something for immediate national coverage but for progressive and controlled expansion, under careful monitoring by the Government of Afghanistan.

The following is a schematic description of the activities to be undertaken (Section C returns to this from the angle of programmatic and project support, to be financed by donors):

Basic Capacity Building & Introduction of Institutional Innovations in Local Governance

Villages & Communities

Establishing open, legitimate Village/community bodies (shuras, or Village Development Committees) based on traditional arrangements, who would need **capacities** for:

- Management & facilitation of community-driven local planning process by VDC/shura, preparation of simple proposals, costing, appraisal and ranking (from within the Village menu) – and use of basic guidelines, aids and tools to ensure poverty focus, and local community operations and maintenance arrangements.
- Basic procurement of goods and services from private or NGO suppliers, simple contract management;
- Training of VDC treasurer/accountant in basic procurement, accounting, financial management, and reporting;
- Generally, information and awareness to communities about the rules and procedures, and especially about the Block Grant facility.

Districts

District Development Committees:

Establishing District Development Committees (DDCs) comprising a manageable number of Village shura/VDC delegates. These would provide Village representation at District level to interact with District officials, participate in District planning, and oversee District service delivery activities, to create some downward accountability. This could initially be an informal

arrangement, to be trialed, and later if successful might be the embryo of a statutory elected District council with modest staffing and administrative capacities, mandated infrastructure & service responsibilities and some legal powers. They would need **capacities** to:

- Review, prioritise, and approve (District menu) planning proposals from VDCs for funding from District block grant;
- Dialogue on/feedback with their Villages/communities of origin on these proposals;
- Liaise with District Administrator, other District staff, and even Province staff on overall planning and development issues in their areas, and bring to bear issues and queries raised by their communities;
- Oversee activities of DRRD (see below) on implementation and financial management;
- Provide overall oversight and facilitation of the community-driven Local Planning Process in the District.

District Dept of Rural Reconstruction & Dev't

Establishing basic DRRD Units – possibly a planner/trainer, an engineer/technician & accountant, who would need **capacities** for:

- Supporting Village planning process, with guidance on costings, technical options, to implementation & procurement, and financial management;
- Supporting DDC planning, with preliminary costing and appraisal of proposals for submission to the DDC;
- Procurement and contract administration on behalf of the DDC, for those District investments managed at District level (noting that many will be managed by communities/Villages);
- Overall liaison with other District and Province line staff;
- Monitoring;
- Accounting, financial management, reporting to the DDC.

Introduction of Local Participatory Planning Procedures & Delivery Support

Instituting a participatory LPP anchored in community need identification and priorities, with final planning decisions made at the lowest feasible level: “local” investments decisions at Village level, feeding upwards into District planning and budgeting for non-Village investment decisions.

The LPP would be an annual procedure for dialogue between these levels to ensure transparent and integrated decision-making, effective and efficient use of funds at each level, and also to ensure integration with government budgeting within District/Province line departments, for sustainability of public investments.

The LPP would be designed so as to require a degree of external facilitation and support which is replicable and sustainable – and so would be less intensive than the sort of “community development” activity usually promoted by NGOs (but would complement these sorts of activities when undertaken in the same areas).

Activities would thus be to:

- Determine respective Village and District planning “menus” – and “context-specific” options for these
- Devise and negotiate basic LPP procedures, steps and timelines, and tools for use at community, Village and District levels (and “context-specific” options for these) for: preparation of proposals, costing, appraisal, ranking, selection & of basic guidelines, aids, tools to ensure poverty focus, budget links and other operation and maintenance provisions.
- Select Districts and negotiate agreement on basic rules
- Support training and extension of these procedures through Province and District teams;
- Facilitate and monitor implementation of LPP in Villages and Districts

Introduction of Block Grant Financing & Implementation Support

Instituting a block grant funding mechanism for those Districts and Villages which are selected and comply with agreements. This in turn will require:

- Sizing the per capita allocations for Districts and Villages;
- Devising and negotiating appropriate minimum conditions of access and performance criteria for both Villages and Districts;
- Ensuring that these are reflected in the agreements to be made with them;
- Reviewing (annually) compliance with these agreements;
- Releasing funds to both levels from the Centre (through whatever is the appropriate system).
- Reviewing post facto performance annually.

Support will also be required for implementation of investments financed through the Village and District block grants: devising simple implementation procedures and procurement capacities which vest “client” authority where possible at community level, but recognizing that in some cases this role must be retained by District – or, in cases, even Province - authorities.

These would be allied with simple guidelines, aids and training for more transparent and efficient contracting and contract administration.

C. THE ROLE OF SUPPORT PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS

“The projects within the programme will focus on shifting from the provision of humanitarian assistance to building the capacity of districts to deal with their challenges”⁶

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW: RECAPITULATION OF SUPPORT AREAS REQUIRED

The strategy framework presented above suggests that in order to promote both more effective local Infrastructure & Service Delivery and improved Local Governance in Afghanistan support will be required for:

- a. Basic **capacity building**, and also trialing of **institutional mechanisms and innovations** for improved local accountability, and for greater citizen interaction with and representation at District government level – this both as key to improved local governance and also as **essential to** the success of b. and c. below (and also to the success of sector programmes).
- b. Devising, trialing and extending an iterative annual bottom up **Local Participatory Planning process**, which aims to integrate Village and District planning, and feed into government budgeting at lower levels
- c. Providing **block grant investment financing** of social and economic infrastructure and services at Village and District levels.

The following table brings together in very summary form the three types of support required at each level:

	CAPACITY BUILDING & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR IMPROVED GOVERNANCE a.	INTRODUCTION OF A BOTTOM UP LOCAL PLANNING PROCESS b.	ALLOCATION OF BLOCK GRANT FUNDS c.
VILLAGE (V)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection & agreement of Villages annually • Establishment of legitimate rep.body • Awareness, training, support & monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devising LPP procedures, guidelines, tools • Training and extension of LPP at Village level • Facilitation of out-sourcing • Support & monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of performance-linked block grants to finance Village menu investments • Reporting & Monitoring
DISTRICT (D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection & agreement of Districts annually • Establishment of legitimate DDC • Devising & introduction of DDC feedback & accountability procedures • Training & support to DDC, DRRD & other District staff • Support & monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devising procedures, guidelines, tools to link District with Village LPP • Training and extension of LPP at District level • Facilitation of outsourcing • Support & monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of performance-linked block grants to finance District menu investments • Reporting & Monitoring
PROVINCE (P)	Support to PDRRD & setup of Province training & support team	Support to support/facilitation by Province team	

⁶ Chairman Karzai, *ibid.*

PROGRAMME & PROJECT SUPPORT: TWO TRACKS

Against this broad picture of support requirements, the following are some broad ideas and suggestions about the role and scope for **future external programme assistance**, including the CDDP itself:

Support to Community & Village Levels

The role of CDDP (see Concept Paper) is to proceed, on a gradually expanding geographic basis, with focus on:

- building community and Village planning capacities and “demand” for public services & infrastructure, and
- providing block grants for the very local community-oriented investments.

This is a project or sub-programme which the World Bank is committed to support.

This covers boxes **V a, b, c and also probably some part of P a and b in the Chart** above.

Support to the District Level & Village-District Interaction

This area is **not** being addressed under CDDP – **boxes D a, b, c in the Chart**. However, it is an area – or 2nd track - which UNDP is well placed to support, and also mobilize additional resources for – and where indeed a part of the funds from sector programmes and line department budgets could also be progressively integrated into the block grant mechanism - and indeed ultimately **should** be, to ensure their effective and transparent allocation at the local level.

Geographic Expansion of Activities on the Two Tracks

It is premature to determine the likely or desirable pace of expansion of the activities outlined above. The major constraint, and the major unknown, is the rate at which viable and accountable Institutional Arrangements can be established at Village and – especially – at District levels.

It is argued by some that establishing viable DDCs at District level will be slower than similar institutional development at Village level – this in turn would mean a slower rate of expansion of District involvement in the LPP, and slower expansion of coverage of District than Village Block Grant (this contention, however, needs further verification).

The chart below is for illustrative and discussion purposes only – where **darker shading suggests wider geographic coverage**.

	Y E A R				
SUB-PROGRAMME TRACK	1	2	3	4	5
VILLAGE (CDDP) Capacity Bldg & Inst Dev't Support to LPP Block Grant Financing					
DISTRICT SUPPORT Capacity Bldg & Inst Dev't Support to integration of LPP with District Block Grant Financing					

TRADE-OFFS: DELIVERY vs. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PRIORITY AREAS

Both the two sub-programme tracks above aim to marry rapid but also effective local infrastructure and service delivery with capacity building and institutional development for improved local governance. There is an inevitable trade-off between these two goals –

although one which may be more apparent than real if the greater effectiveness and sustainability of investment delivery through these arrangements is factored in.

But, that said, the mission is well aware that Government is especially concerned to ensure quick delivery of strategic investment financing in certain geographic “**priority areas**” that have been badly affected by the years of conflict.

Within these priority areas an immediate **fast track approach** to delivery of basic infrastructure and services is proposed:

- fast track implementation of key local strategic investments, with emphasis on labour-based technologies; with
- a minimalist consultative planning process, in a more “top down” and “project-managed” manner and with much less emphasis on capacity building or institutional development, except insofar as it concerns the immediate operation and maintenance of these investments.

Given likely conflict of goals, it is proposed to phase-in the CDDP and District support sub-programmes in these areas after at least 2 years of fast track investment.

This is an area which UNDP is committed to support, and to mobilize resources for.

VARIOUS SECTOR PROGRAMMES

As already noted, several large sector – education, roads, water, health, agriculture – programmes are likely to be forthcoming. A review of the likely focus of these programmes (see Box below) suggests that most of the expenditure will be at District or Village level – or, rather, that these are the levels which subsidiarity arguments suggest have potential “comparative advantage” in their planning/financing, once basic institutional arrangements and capacities are in place at there.

Ranges of Sector Infrastructure & Services to be Delivered – an Illustration

Education: new/rehab primary & secondary schools, teachers, materials; adult literacy
Health: new/rehab posts, clinics, hospitals; medical personnel; drugs; equipment; vaccination; public health education
Drinking Water: new/rehab wells, pumps, boreholes, gravity schemes, reticulated systems
Access: new/rehab tracks, trails, culverts, feeder & secondary roads;
Agriculture: new/rehab large & small irrigation systems; water harvesting; farm inputs; markets & processing; extension & veterinary services; financial services; crop protection; farm roads/tracks; catchment protection works; etc.

It is therefore important that there is dialogue with sector authorities and sector-supporting donors to establish agreed benchmarks for planning and management capacity and accountability at both District and Village levels. In the future, once these have been attained, sector funds should then be channeled into the Block grant facilities – probably initially on a conditional but loosely earmarked basis.