



AFGHANISTAN CRISIS: UNDP STRATEGY

A transition strategy for Afghanistan and the immediate region

Afghanistan has for far too long, lived outside the mainstream of the international community. Limited international engagement over the years has greatly reduced the incentives for Afghanistan to play its role as an international citizen.

After more than two decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan, significant economic resources have been diverted for the continuation of the war at the expense of civilians. Military employment offers an opportunity of economic survival to many young men and their families. The fragmentation of the country and the collapse of practically all national institutions of governance has allowed the development of large-scale criminalized economic activities. The nation's transportation and communication systems, heavy and small-scale industries, education, and agricultural infrastructure are almost entirely damaged. This economic decline has exacerbated levels of poverty and economic hardship throughout the country. Largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, the country has witnessed diminishing income levels, declining food security, and reduced access to essential services. The value of the Afghan currency continues to fall, having severe repercussions on individual purchasing power. Until this year's ban on poppy cultivation, a vast number of households have been dependent on opium for their livelihoods; in some provinces almost all households (95%) sold opium to earn an income.

Afghanistan's Human Development indicators for its estimated 18 million inhabitants are some of the worst in the world and today's crisis needs to be understood against this background.¹ The number of the internally displaced persons is estimated to be about 1.2 million. In the month of January in one camp alone for the displaced over 150 people died as a result of the freezing weather. The mine menace continues to devastate civilians with over 3,000 injuries in 1999. The primary gross enrollment rate is estimated at 39 per cent for boys and as low as 3 per cent for girls. One in four children do not survive to their fifth birthday and an estimated 15,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related causes; there is an average of one doctor per 50,000 people in Afghanistan. Three to four million Afghans are severely affected by the current drought. As a result of this and other calamities, an estimated 3.8 million of Afghanistan's population are dependent on food aid.

¹ An estimated 3.5 million Afghans in addition are displaced in Iran and Pakistan.

Despite its international isolation, a number of international actors have supported Afghans over the decades. UNDP itself has delivered a programme of some \$161 million from 1992-2001. The Afghanistan Support Group (ASG), with its rotating Chair, meets twice a year providing an effective forum for donors and agencies to meet; it is currently led by Germany with Norway taking the Chair effective 1 January 2002. A Strategic Framework exercise in 1997 that aimed at bringing coherence to the multilateral, bilateral and non governmental effort (supported by over \$1 million in UNDP core resources) was also a groundbreaking exercise for new approaches in international cooperation, and strongly supported by financial and politically by ASG members.

Despite the tragic circumstances for which Afghanistan now finds itself the centre of world attention, it is critical now that the people of Afghanistan reap the peace dividend that they so richly deserve. The international support that appears now in the offing must be sustained, to deal with systemic issues upon which a viable development process can be launched. The UNDP strategy in Afghanistan will therefore embody a clear conflict prevention perspective, seeking to identify structural risk factors and promote measures to minimize their impact. In addition the UNDP strategy will include a strong governance component given that governance issues have been at the center of the conflict in Afghanistan; the new challenge for the UN's development actors is to support an inter-Afghan process that will lead to the development of a consensus on a framework of norms, institutions and mechanisms for a new governance framework in Afghanistan. This approach will also imply that recovery and downstream activities will be developed and implemented in a way that will facilitate inter-community cooperation and reconciliation. Early involvement of development actors in the political process is key; UNDP is already working closely with the SRSG to ensure that this is the case.

UNDP will harness its field network of core and project staff in Afghanistan and beyond to this important cause. That network encompasses an extensive infrastructure throughout Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Specifically, it includes: In **Afghanistan**, an office established in the 1950s with over 700 national and international core and project staff implementing over \$20 million in programmes per annum. The PEACE programme, outlined below, is the centre-piece of this operation; in **Pakistan**, 34 national and international core staff, and some 400 under project financing, delivering over \$10 million in assistance per annum, addressing poverty eradication and sustainable human development through governance, gender and sustainable livelihoods; in **Iran**, a team of 32 national and international core and project staff delivering some \$3.8 million per annum, focusing on poverty alleviation and sustainable development, economic and resource-based management, and governance with an important component tackling disaster response and preparedness; in **Tajikistan**, a \$6 million annual operation is implemented by a team of over 150 core and project staff assisting in governance, natural resource management, livelihood creation, and demobilization and rehabilitation; in **Turkmenistan**, a \$3 million per annum operation is managed by 24 staff assisting in local governance and capacity building for Municipal Services and HIV/AIDS; and in **Uzbekistan**, an annual programme of \$12 million targeting income generation through support to micro-credit and micro-enterprise development as well as drought mitigation is delivered by a team of 95 national and international core and project staff. These combined resources are a critical force for good at the centre of the international effort.

Afghanistan Crisis: UNDP Strategy

UNDP also chairs a recently created UNDG working group on Afghanistan, providing a forum to formulate strategy for recovery and reconstruction embracing all Agencies, Funds and Programmes of the UN system. The World Bank has been invited to participate. The group serves as an information-sharing opportunity, linking the UNDG to the Integrated Mission Task Force in which UNDP is a full time member.

Four UNDP core products and services for the Afghanistan transition

1. A recovery process that mends as it builds.

A recovery approach focuses on how best to restore the capacity of governments and communities to rebuild and recover from crisis and to prevent relapses. In so doing, recovery seeks not only to catalyze sustainable development activities but also to build upon earlier humanitarian programmes to ensure that their inputs become assets for development. Rather than a hand-over, UNDP understands this transition as a process of identifying development needs and beginning the work of recovery as early as possible, drawing upon existing development resources and creating new, appropriate and adapted resources for development to respond to these needs.

UNDP's strategy for Afghanistan, therefore, makes a distinction between a transitional recovery phase (which includes immediate reconstruction) and a major reconstruction phase in Afghanistan, albeit the two phases would overlap in practice. This distinction is based on two factors; firstly the need for a fast and flexible developmental response to the various crises affecting Afghanistan that will limit the dependence on aid whilst supplying needed services and secondly, the unpredictable nature and timing of the formation and effectiveness of a new government. Transitional recovery can take place with or without a national government, whilst reconstruction can only take place with a national government, or at least with a regional administration. Afghanistan cannot remain only as a recipient of relief whilst awaiting the formation and effectiveness of a national government.

UNDP's transition recovery activities in Afghanistan will build on the existing Poverty Elimination And Community Empowerment (PEACE) programme in an expanded form that will include a rapid response unit, rural and urban rehabilitation, sustainable livelihood generation programming, and tools for drought mitigation. These efforts will target:

- Basic social services and strengthening of community self-help capacities for vulnerable communities
- Food security and sustainable livelihoods
- Re-integration of refugees and the internally displaced and integration of the disabled
- Rapid response and support to the humanitarian effort
- Rural rehabilitation
- Restoration of essential social services (such as health, education, water and sanitation and electricity) and rebuilding of communities in urban areas.
- Rehabilitation and employment
- Alternative livelihood strategies to poppy cultivation

Particular attention will be paid to restoring access by women to social services and their full participation in productive and economic activities, in which they have been unable to participate in recent years.

The PEACE programme is led by UNDP with strategic partnerships with FAO, Habitat and UNOPS that implement major components of the operation. Until its recent suspension of

activities, the (approximately \$20 million annual) PEACE programme reached millions of Afghans directly or indirectly; some 500,000 Afghans for example, have been assisted through agricultural activities, close to 10,000 through credit schemes and 35,000 disabled persons have benefited from a special window dedicated to their needs. Perhaps most importantly, an estimated 2,100 rural and urban community organizations have been supported by the PEACE programme since its inception; the programme's support to the *shura* tradition lies at the heart of its success to date.

Country focus: Afghanistan.

Key partners: Habitat, UNOPS, FAO, UNOCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, UNDCP, UNV

2. Support to administration, planning and governance systems for Afghanistan's reconstruction

Reconstruction will be undertaken by the future government of Afghanistan as and when it is established. The attention of UNDP will then shift towards that of supporting the establishment of local and national capacities and directing development assistance through those national institutions. The technical and managerial capability of a new administration will be very limited, hence capacity building in itself will be a major undertaking.

The reconstruction planning process presumes that a government and an administration that is acceptable to the international community will be established. This will likely be a long process that will follow closely behind the political process. It will involve a large number of participants, including that of technocratic representatives of the International Afghan Community, and culminate in a series of technical plans for national and local reconstruction. UNDP will provide technical support both for the technical planning and to build the capability of government institutions on policy formulation and the creation of an enabling environment in which government, civil society and private sector will be able to work together towards recovery and reconstruction. To prepare for this reconstruction phase there will be a need for UNDP to create partnerships with government and with a new set of development agencies with different types of technical expertise that will be able to engage in large scale technical planning and policy making issues.

UNDP, with its experience of reconstruction planning in Afghanistan and its long history of development activity inside of Afghanistan, is well positioned to start forging new partnerships with new development actors and developing a planning processes with them. For example, UNDP and World Bank have already begun a dialogue on the foundations for future assistance to Afghanistan, and UNDP has already conducted a major planning study for immediate rehabilitation in Afghanistan in 1993. Furthermore, UNDP already has extensive experience in reconstruction planning through their 1993 planning study for Immediate Rehabilitation in Afghanistan.

UNDP is in the relatively unique position of having experience of working in a sustainable manner with a large number of community groups both with and without the involvement of a government in Afghanistan. This experience will help to build an element of "normality" into

the lives of communities who are currently living in very chaotic circumstances. It will also help bridge the divide between community organisations and that of government.

UNDP's governance-type interventions will likely include some or all of the following elements:

- ◆ Rebuilding governance institutions and processes at the national level;
- ◆ Supporting local/community governance and administration;
- ◆ Rebuilding regional governance and administration;
- ◆ Supporting reform in the legal, institutional and security sectors to ensure the rule of law;
- ◆ Identifying strategic institutional entry points to improve the delivery of essential services;
- ◆ Promoting women's participation in governance institutions and processes at all levels;
- ◆ Rebuilding coordination structures, such as reintegration or reconstruction commissions, that ensure that all future Government institutions collaborate in the recovery of the country;
- ◆ Rebuilding national planning processes for reintegration, demobilization or recovery processes;
- ◆ Vulnerability-mapping and hazard-mapping (building particularly, on the UNDP-supported Programme Management Information System or "ProMIS" platform);
- ◆ Harnessing the talents of the Afghan diaspora through the establishment of data bases and the launching of programmes like UNDP/UNV's TOKTEN modality; and
- ◆ Rebuilding public sector management.

Given the level of uncertainty for this aspect of the UNDP transition operation, scenario planning has already been launched to pre-position key staff and resources for rapid start-up. Planning for this phase of the operation will begin at the end-November Watching Brief meeting where Task Forces will be created to start developing sectoral plans. A concerted effort to create an early planning mechanism for Afghan leadership of reconstruction planning will be given highest priority over the coming weeks.

Country focus: Afghanistan.

Key partners: SRSG, DPKO, World Bank, IOM, UNV, UNIFEM, DPA

3. Regional implications

The Afghanistan crisis presents both negative and positive challenges for neighbouring countries. The influx of displaced persons in neighbouring countries provides an unprecedented strain on coping strategies of both local and community services. The crisis has fundamentally affected trade patterns and in the case of Pakistan, created an environment of volatility. As a result, in Pakistan UNDP is urgently up-scaling major area-based programmes particularly in the least developed parts of Pakistan, e.g. Balochistan and North West Frontier Province, which are most affected by developments in Afghanistan and deepening the coverage of these programmes in new fields such as community-based water harvesting and

conservation, water channel rehabilitation, farm-to-market roads, micro-credit and enterprise development, community-based rangeland/watershed management, and employment measures for youth.

To confront the situation of institutional decay and breakdown in Pakistan a national reconstruction process undertaken by the government in the last two years has just started to yield results. It is essential that this reform process is not set back by the crisis, and UNDP can assist to turn the crisis into an opportunity for enhancement of community participation in the development of the country. Further initiatives are also needed to develop conflict resolution initiatives into existing area based and community based projects. This will also include a special initiative for women in peace building roles.

A transitional recovery programme is being developed for Iran, which will address the developmental implications of the possible influx of an additional 400,000 refugees from Afghanistan (beyond the estimated two million already in Iran), particularly in the light of the pressure caused by drought on already scarce resources, including measures to promote food security, improvement of water management, job creation and local capacity building.

Serious concerns also exist as to the impact the current crisis will have on Central Asian countries which are already politically and economically fragile. Central Asia faces new challenges in addressing security threats, borders, land, water and energy related disputes, Islamic extremism and drug trafficking. Under these circumstances, failure to address fundamental issues such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, empowerment, government accountability, effectiveness and transparency may very well lead to further instability. Building on current on-going activities therefore, UNDP is working particularly on employment creation, capacity building of local authorities, political and administrative governance and participatory social and economic development in the region as part of a more comprehensive preventive development approach. National level preventive development programmes are already being implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Since mid-1996, \$25 million have been disbursed in key parts of Tajikistan under the Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Programme on the Afghan border, including areas that were the stronghold of the Islamic opposition, and Karategin and Ferghana Valleys. The on-going preventive development programme in the South of Kyrgyzstan, responds to the increased needs for maintaining peace and stability in the Ferghana Valley applying a system of *conflict assessment* (vulnerability analysis) and *early warning indicators* (at the village and regional level).

Seen from a more positive angle, recent developments in Central Asia also suggest an important opportunity is presenting itself, to harness international interest to further the development process in these countries positively. UNDP is therefore working with these countries to put this positive climate to good use in the interests of furthering the development process. The UN's normative agenda in these countries of transition must not be lost amongst this atmosphere of goodwill.

Country focus: Afghanistan Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan
Key partners: ADB, World Bank, DPA, OCHA, UNDCP, EU

4. UN Coordination

The UN's overall response to the Afghanistan crisis is being led by the Secretary General's Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi. The SRSG and his office will anchor an ongoing effort to ensure integration across political, developmental and humanitarian fields.

Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators will be at the core of all assistance and technical cooperation efforts in Afghanistan for years to come, operating with the full support of UNDP and the UN system as a whole.

UNDP's Resident Representative for Afghanistan is also Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for that country. More recently, this latter role has been expanded to regional coverage. In Tajikistan the UNDP Resident Representative is also Humanitarian Coordinator. Resident Coordinator functions are also provided by the UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Resident Coordinators are providing leadership on coordination of all operational activities for development. These services have already facilitated preparation of contingency plans, backstopped the field work of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his staff, provided a coordinated approach vis-à-vis the media, and provided a security umbrella for UN staff through the functions of the Designated Official.

UNDP will provide ongoing support to Resident Coordinators. The fielding of additional staff to bolster the work on the development pillar will be necessary in view of growing demands. Additional support measures vis-à-vis the media, joint planning and other aspects of coordination are also envisaged.

Country focus: Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan.
Key partners: UN Development Group members

The UNDP approach for Afghanistan

UNDP's strategy, in responding to the Afghanistan crisis, builds upon:

- ◆ a long-standing history in Afghanistan and the region,
- ◆ existing programmatic assets that can be built upon,
- ◆ a complementary role as coordinator of UN operational activities,
- ◆ a distributed network of field offices throughout neighbouring countries with heavily decentralized decision-making systems
- ◆ a track record of tackling some of the most complex and sensitive challenges of effective governance, from public administration to rule of law and
- ◆ an approach to recovery processes that promotes policies informed by community-level work with the most vulnerable groups.

UNDP's strategy therefore, will aim to:

- ◆ **Continue providing leadership to the UN Development Group** on development strategies, including capacity-building, institutional-development and public administration.
- ◆ **Leverage its Afghanistan network to secure Afghan leadership for the recovery and development process with a minimum of delay.** For example, the forthcoming UNDP-World Bank "Watching Brief" Meeting scheduled for Afghanistan in late November, will be anchored by Afghan technical and policy specialists.
- ◆ **Pre-position financial and human resources based on scenario planning.** Whereas there are many unknowns about what kind of institution-building UNDP might be called in to provide, the preliminary design work will be undertaken up front in order to be ready to move at very short notice.
- ◆ **Work closely with other UN actors.** This includes support to the SRSG – UNDP has seconded a full time staff member already to the Integrated Mission Task Force – and maintaining key strategic partnerships such as with The World Bank, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOCHA, WFP, FAO and Habitat.
- ◆ **Restrict its areas of intervention to where it can strictly add value.** UNDP will not brand itself as an intermediary but rather a direct provider of services, from coordination, to key down-stream community services to policy advice on institution building for poverty elimination.
- ◆ **Build linkages between Afghanistan-specific interventions, and complementary activities over the border in the immediate region and beyond.**
- ◆ **Continue UNDP's coordination services to the wider UN system.**
- ◆ **Safeguard staff security.** Close cooperation with UNSECOORD and other Agencies will be maintained in order to preserve the safety and security needs of staff members delivering programmes/projects.

October 30, 2001

Afghanistan: Some Basic Facts

- ◆ 700 square kilometers of land is contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). There have been up to 3,000 injuries from landmines and UXO in 1999 alone.
- ◆ The primary gross enrolment ratio has been most recently calculated as being 39 percent for boys, with a corresponding rate for girls of 3 percent, with the assistance community being able to provide education to about merely 7% of 4.4 million children of primary school age.
- ◆ Nearly one thousand children died during the measles epidemic during the spring of 2000 in Afghanistan. Every one of these deaths could have been prevented if the children had been immunized or had access to basic health services.
- ◆ Many more thousands of children die each year of diarrhea and pneumonia; from all causes about one out of four children die before the age of five years. In addition an estimated 15,000 women die every year from pregnancy related causes.
- ◆ It is among the countries with highest rates of infant mortality (165 per 1000 live births), child mortality (257 under five year olds out of every 1000 born), and maternal mortality (1700 per 100,000).
- ◆ Currently there is an average of only one physician for every 50,000 people in Afghanistan. Even these meager resources are not equally distributed as 50 of Afghanistan's 330 districts have neither a basic health centre nor access to immunization services.



- ◆ Maternal and child health services are lacking in most areas of Afghanistan. Only 11 out of Afghanistan's 31 provinces have essential obstetric care) services.
- ◆ An estimated 23 per cent of the total population has access to safe water, and only 12 per cent to adequate sanitation.
- ◆ With estimated population of 18 million² about 12 million Afghans are affected by drought, three to four million severely. An estimated 3.8 million Afghans are dependent on food aid.
- ◆ There are currently an estimated 5.3 million vulnerable people inside Afghanistan. With approximately 1.2 million peopled displaced internally. There are also two million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 1.5 million Afghan refugees in Iran.

² This figure is given by Central Statistics Office in 1998 and the annual growth rate is estimated at around 2%. The last official census was conducted in 1978.