

## National Human Development Report (NHDR)

### Brainstorming Sessions Report – 2013

#### Background

Human development refers to the process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources need for a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect.

The concept of Human Development was first introduced in 1990. It argued that people are the real wealth of a nation and development should be about creating opportunities for individuals to lead long healthy, knowledgeable and creative lives at a decent standard of living with freedom and agency to choose a life they have reason to value and influence social life.

With the 2014 security transition combined with the presidential election, Afghanistan is at a crossroad. At this juncture in its history, the country has a demographic profile where half of its population is very young and youthful. This demographic asset has the potential to either propel the country to prosperity or back to the path of destruction, where it had been for the most part of last generation.

Afghanistan is in the process of preparing the next National Human Development Report (HDR) which is targeted to be launched by 2014. Taking into account the HDR process suggested in the HDR toolkit established by the Human Development Report Office in UNDP, the NHDR process is scheduled as follows:

- Initial consultations (September 2013)
- Theme Selection (Oct-Dec 2013)
- Building the NHDR team (Dec-Feb 2014)
- Research and consultations (March-May 2014)
- Drafting, reviews and revisions (May-July 2014)
- Production (August-Sept 2014)
- Dissemination and advocacy (Sept-Dec 2014)
- Sustained follow up (Dec 2014 onwards)

The third NHDR will be produced in 2014 focusing on the important development issues that could contribute in advancing human development in Afghanistan.

This note summarizes consultations held on brainstorming a theme for the NHDR with: Afghan Women Network, and a brainstorming session in Badakhshan including representatives from government, civil society, youth groups and students.

#### This table represents the outcome of theme selection consultations conducted with key stakeholders

Agency	Participants	Identified theme
Afghan Women's Network	22 participants	Good Governance
Cluster of private universities	7 Deans of Universities	Youth and Employment
Badakhshan province	60 participants (government, civil society, academia)	Social and Economic Equity
UN Programme Management Team	18 participants	Social and Economic Equity
Balkh province	60 participants (government, civil society, academia)	Social and Economic Equity
Ministry of Finance	Deputy Minister for Policy	
AREU	AREU Director	

Note: The outcome from each brainstorming session discussed separately

## **(1) NHDR Brainstorming Session with Women Civil Society Organizations**

Venue: Afghan Women Network (AWN)

Date: October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013



The first brainstorming session on NHDR was conducted with the Afghan Women Network (AWN) inviting representatives from Afghan women's civil society organizations. The session started at 09:00am, with 25 participants including CSO directors, program managers and leading actors.

A presentation on overall NHDR process was presented by Masood Ferhamand – Policy Specialist, lasting for 90 minutes. Group work was also conducted by participants on selecting the theme for writing a good NHDR. The group came up with below themes accordingly:

- 1) Women's Empowerment
- 2) Security for Women
- 3) Women's Economic Empowerment
- 4) Prevent child mortality (in suburban areas)
- 5) Education for Women (hygienic education)
- 6) Good governance

The substance of the discussion focused on rule of law in Afghanistan. Participants discussed the responsibilities of the government of Afghanistan in relation to the rule of law. Participants stressed the lack of institutions in provinces leading to the erosion of social cohesion. This was noted as a cause for Afghans joining the insurgency. Unemployment was underscored as a feature contributing to violence—with youth joining armed anti-government elements. Accountability and transparency were noted as challenges for the government. Governors and government bodies in the provinces were described as unaccountable to the Afghan people.



The workshop voted and agreed on one theme: Good governance. Due to the participants' underscoring of accountability challenges, good governance was selected as the response to the challenges.

The active participants were requested to participate in the NHDR theme validation and introduction workshop to be held between in December 2013 or January 2014.

## **(2) NHDR Brainstorming Session in Badakhshan Province**

Venue: Kokcha Hotel – Faizabad

*Date: November 26<sup>th</sup> - 2013*

Policy Unit conducted a brainstorming session on the NHDR theme in Badakhshan Province (Faizabad) on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013. 60 participants from women and men civil society organizations and Youth groups attended, with a majority of Governmental University students. Director of Women’s Affairs for the provincial government attended; a member of the provincial council actively participated. The below points were discussed by the participants group to be considered while drafting the 2014 NHDR.

- 1) Social and economic equity
- 2) Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan
- 3) Education quality improvement
- 4) National identity to ensure citizens’ rights
- 5) Social pluralism

Participants emphasized that all Afghan citizens should be treated equally under the constitution and law. A focus of discussion was that Afghans should not be grouped according to their ethnicity or class. Several participants discussed intra- and inter-provincial disparities in development. Some provinces were noted as receiving high levels of budget support from the central government, while others received less. The political relationships of different personalities – the governor of the province, for example – were noted as determining the unequal support provinces received. Another subject of extensive conversation was that aid was not effective as expected—government officials were viewed as corrupt and co-opting the benefits of aid.



Participants collectively agreed on Social and Economic Equity as their suggested theme for the coming NHDR in 2014. Social and economic equity would be an ideal theme because it would reflect the challenges confronted in the northern regions and provinces in aid impact and effectiveness. Participants were also requested to participate in the NHDR them validation and introduction workshop to be held in December 2013 or January 2014.

## **(3) NHDR Brainstorming Session in Balkh Province**

In order to ensure that Afghan’s voices captured and documented on human development, Policy Unit of UNDP implemented a consultative brainstorming session in Balkh. The brainstorming session included a presentation on the concept and principles of NHDR. Respectively, working groups were formed to discuss pressing development issues in Afghanistan and suggest a list of possible themes for the 2014 NHDR.

The participants following a detailed discussion, came up with the below themes and each group presented the outcome of their discussions to the larger group.

- Gender equality and Women empowerment
- Security and Stability
- Youth and Education
- Social and Economic Equity
- Good Governance and Public Administration

Participants noted that the government institutions should engage public on the budgeting, and planning process so that to ensure that people's priorities are reflected in the budget and allocation of resources is equitable and inclusive. Participants indicated responsive and accountable government as one of their important aspirations. In addition, there were a number of other pressing issues discussed such as security and stability which is deemed as a determining factor of development in Afghanistan. Equally important, participants stressed that gender equality and women empowerment is also crucial for social and economic development.



It was eventually agreed that social and economic equity would be the most appropriate theme for the Afghanistan's next NHDR.

#### **(4) NHDR Brainstorming Session with UN Programme Management Team**

Policy Unit also sought inputs from UN Programme Management Team on the next NHDR theme through organizing of a two-hour consultative session which was held on 17<sup>th</sup> of Nov-2013. The consultation was led by Christopher Kuonqui Head of the Policy Unit a.i. A group of 18 participants from different UN agencies were invited to participate in the workshop to brainstorm ideas for a list of potential themes for the next NHDR. After an exhaustive discussion and group work participants selected the following themes:

- Youth and Employment
- Gender equality and Women's Empowerment
- Environmental sustainability
- Social and Economic Equity

Given the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, participants listed high levels of unemployment which will affect directly youth as a major development issue in Afghanistan. Environmental sustainability was another central part of the discussion whereas, participants stressed that people are moving from rural areas to cities therefore the environment in urban areas is greatly under pressure.

Increase in violence against women and girls as well as common forms of gender inequality in the workplaces were other major parts of the discussion. Consequently, social and economic equity was suggested as the most appropriate theme for the NHDR-2014 for many reasons: based on the recent reports the divide between poor and rich is widening and levels of income inequality as a consequence of direct implementation of development projects by donors in targeted provinces are

increasing as well. The participants stressed that expectation from the next NHDR is to provide greater analysis of the situation in terms of social and economic inequality and recommend solutions to lessen the gap between rich and poor and other forms of inequalities.

#### **(5) NHDR Brainstorming Session with Universities**

Policy Unit also held a series of individual consultations with Kabul University and number of private universities in Kabul. Although Kabul University provided a venue for the theme selection discussion but few of the universities had organized other meetings at the same time and as a result a collective discussion did not take place. Despite that few possible themes for the NHDR emerged from the discussions but deans of universities attach greater weight to the issues of youth and unemployment in Afghanistan.

They highlighted the importance of youth in shaping future of the country. The general consensus was that youth in Afghanistan carry the burdens of neglect and marginalization due to decades of conflict and civil wars and therefore this brings the need to pay greater attention to their needs, and aspirations. Lack of job opportunities for youth, lack of their participation in decision making processes were also discussed as main challenges youth face in Afghanistan.