

## **Submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry into Australia's overseas development programme in Afghanistan.**

Prepared by ActionAid Afghanistan & ActionAid Australia  
August 2012

*On 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2012, the following matter was referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 31 December 2012.*

*The administration, management and objectives of Australia's overseas development programmes in Afghanistan in the context of the 'Transformation Decade', including:*

- (a) An evaluation of Australia's bilateral aid program to date in Afghanistan;*
- (b) An evaluation of the interaction and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid, multilateral aid, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and other Australian government departments delivering aid;*
- (c) The means to most effectively address the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan;*
- (d) How to guarantee the safety of all workers involved in the delivery of Australian aid programs in Afghanistan; and*
- (e) Any other related matters.*

The following submission prepared by ActionAid Afghanistan and ActionAid Australia seeks to provide the committee with insights pertinent to Afghanistan's development during the next ten years with specific reference to Australia's focus on violence against women and food security in Afghanistan. This submission responds primarily to clauses (a), (c), and (e) from the above terms of reference.

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## 1. Recommendations to Donors re-Violence Against Women & Food Security.

### Development partners should:

#### Regarding Violence Against Women:

- I. As a first step, immediately commit \$30m for three years for the National Priority Programs (NPP) 'Capacity development to implement the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA)'
- II. Make binding guarantees to ensure full funding for the NAPWA commitments on violence against women and girls and Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women LEVAW
- III. Make provision so that women's rights organisations can access funding directly to provide services and engage in advocacy and accountability work around the NAPWA and LEVAW
- IV. Push to establish a transparent process that shows how the NAPWA and LEVAW are being implemented and financed

#### Regarding Agriculture:

- V. Focus agricultural programming on the actual requirements of poor farmers and women with long-term scope and consistency in coordination with different actors.
- VI. Seek and include the expectations of women farmers into agriculture policies to maintain their full participation in the process of policy making and implementation.
- VII. Donors' commitments to fund the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) priority programs should be met in time to tackle major food insecurity constraints caused every other year due to drought or every year's flood. Those projects that have been prioritized and not funded should be.
- VIII. Plan, in coordination with the MAIL and technical support of NGOs, new drought and flood prone programs to reduce the devastating risk of such natural disasters.
- IX. Facilitate more opportunities for civil society in Afghanistan working in agriculture to help the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) and the donor community to reach people in need, especially in remote locations
- X. Support government's role in leading the development programs for the sector as per the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) in promoting indigenous knowledge and practices and aligning these with the modern techniques and equipment.
- XI. Support Government in the processes of need assessment, budgeting, resource transfer and implementation.
- XII. Promote and support government to mobilise domestic resources (taxation) to fund recurrent expenses and use the donor money only for the development of the sector.
- XIII. Expand diversified farming options to discourage poppy cultivation.
- XIV. Support action against high profile people involved in the trade and trafficking of opium and opium poppies.
- XV. Continue to support government's focus on economic infrastructural development including in agriculture and animal husbandry as all other sectors are highly dependent on them.

## 2. Tackling violence against women and girls

Securing women's rights was one of the main goals of the coalition intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. The status and security of women can therefore be seen as a litmus test of the degree to which a better Afghanistan is left behind after troop withdrawal in 2014. During recent milestone events in the 'Kabul Process' (the transition to full Afghan leadership and responsibility over security and development), there has been growing recognition of the need to protect women's rights.

We will continue to support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) in its efforts to meet its obligations to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, including **in the rights of women and girls** and the freedom to practice religion.

Camp David Declaration of the G8 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012

We reiterate the importance Allies attach to seeing tangible progress by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan regarding its commitments ... to a democratic society, based on the rule of law and good governance, including progress in the fight against corruption, where the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens, **including the equality of men and women and the active participation of both in Afghan society, are respected.**

Chicago Summit Declaration, North Atlantic Council, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012

### i. Achievements to date

Over the past decade, there has been significant progress in improving women's rights in Afghanistan:

- Establishing a new constitution which enshrines equal rights for women and men<sup>i</sup>
- Enacting a new landmark Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law
- Initial endorsement of a new National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA)<sup>ii</sup>
- Establishing women's shelters for the first time<sup>iii</sup>
- Ensuring just over 27% of MPs are women<sup>iv</sup>
- Ensuring 25% of government jobs are filled by women<sup>v</sup>
- Ensuring over 2 million girls are now in school<sup>vi</sup>
- Ensuring more women are free to participate in public life and to work outside their homes as doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs and lawyers – a situation once made impossible by the Taliban

Achievements of Australia's development assistance program at the national level include: In Uruzgan Province, Australia has contributed to:

- School construction – 205 schools, including 29 girls' schools, were registered in the province in 2011, up from 34 in 2006.
- Community organised primary education programs promote girls' education in remote communities, while school-feeding programs, through the World Food Programme, promote girls' attendance at school by providing take-home rations
- Maternal health care – now 80 per cent of pregnant women in Uruzgan Province receive at least one antenatal health care visit  
Health clinics, supported by Australia, provide safe motherhood programs including antenatal, postnatal and children's health support. Afghanistan previously had the worst maternal mortality rate in the world and among the worst child mortality rates.
- Australia also promotes the participation of women in public debate and government decision-making. Australia has supported the training of local Afghan female election observers, increasing women's participation in the electoral process

## ii. On-going Challenges

These gains, whilst highly significant, are unfortunately not equitably shared. Women in rural areas, particularly in the more conservative southern provinces (including Uruzgan) are still facing restrictions and violence when working outside the home. Many women across the country still lack basic rights like access to justice and economic independence from men.<sup>vii</sup> The maternal mortality rate remains high, with one woman dying every two hours due to pregnancy-related causes.<sup>viii</sup> Almost nine in ten women over the age of 15 are illiterate.<sup>ix</sup> And girls' school enrolment figures are not matched by attendance, with early and forced marriage<sup>x</sup> and attacks on girls' schools<sup>xi</sup> still major barriers to girls' education. **Alarming, 87% of women face at least one form of domestic violence, with some experiencing several.**<sup>xii</sup>

As 2014 and the planned withdrawal of troops draws near, there is a real and present danger that gains already made will either not be sustained, or worse, will be overturned. Indeed, in areas where the Taliban insurgency is gaining ground, women are being systematically targeted with threats and use of violence, and progress in the crucial areas of health and education is in reverse<sup>xiii</sup>.

The extent to which violence against women and girls remains pervasive within Afghanistan is an appropriate indicator of both development and security progress in the country. A recent survey by ActionAid of 1000 women from across Afghanistan found:<sup>xiv</sup>

- Two-thirds feel their lives have improved over the last ten years
- But 9 out of 10 fear a return to Taliban-style government with one third specifically worried about international troops leaving
- Violence against women remains a pressing security concern:
  - The biggest fear of women under 30 is sexual assault
  - All women were more fearful of sexual assault than they are of abduction, kidnapping or being caught in an explosion – combined

Meanwhile women who enter public life do so at significant risk:

- Khan Mohammad was head of a girls' school in Logar province. She was killed in May 2011.<sup>xv</sup>
- Sitara Achakzai was a provincial council member in Kandahar. She was killed in April 2009.<sup>xvi</sup>
- Malalai Kakar was the highest-ranking female police officer in Kandahar. She led a 10-woman police unit focused on domestic violence. She was killed in September 2008.<sup>xvii</sup>
- Safiye Amajan was the provincial director of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. She was killed in September 2006.<sup>xviii</sup>

### Security for women is fundamental to Afghanistan's future development prospects

Violence against women and girls is a gross violation of human rights. ActionAid has also shown that it blocks progress across the major development agendas.<sup>xix</sup> For example, violence against girls was a major factor causing the 2005 Millennium Development Goal of achieving gender parity in schooling to be missed due to the fact that girls are subject to routine violence in, around and on the journeys to and from school, and are forced into early marriages, causing them to drop out of school at much higher rates than boys. In the case of Afghanistan, girls in school have specifically been specifically attacked as part of the insurgency, and girls are dropping out of school at alarming in Taliban-targeted areas.<sup>xx</sup> Prospects for Afghanistan's future development will be compromised if women's fear for their personal security prevents them from playing a full part in the economic life of the country. There are growing signs of a 'brain drain' of women from Afghanistan, and those who remain are increasingly likely to choose not to work.<sup>xxi</sup>

*In May 2012 the Afghan Ministry of Education revealed that in recent years 500 schools have been closed in Provinces where the Taleban have strong support, with some 30,000 children being sent home. Meanwhile, militants who oppose the education of girls have been blamed for a string of suspected poisonings in Afghanistan. Female teachers and girls as young as ten have had to leave school with nausea, dizziness and fainting. These horrific incidents are a continuation of a trend that has seen girls' schools targeted by the Taleban with bombs and arson attacks. A police spokesperson told the BBC that he believed insurgents were trying to spread fear by poisoning schoolgirls.*

*Reported on the BBC website 31st May 2012*

**If the international community is serious in its intent to support Afghanistan in a successful transition towards peace and development, tackling violence against women and girls must be at the centrepiece of the compact for Afghanistan's future.**

Clearly, the solutions to the problem of violence against women and girls lie principally within Afghanistan itself, and the effort against violence against women and girls needs to be led by the Government of Afghanistan. As noted above, two major government initiatives – the NAPWA and the EVAW law – set out the policy and legal frameworks for tackling the problem. While they each have weaknesses, the NAPWA and the EVAW law could form a solid foundation for progress on violence against women and girls. However, both remain very far from being fully implemented.

The NAPWA provides a policy framework to guide the work of all relevant government departments in improving the women's rights in Afghanistan. It contains 35 commitments to help tackle violence against women.

**Sample NAPWA commitments on violence against women and girls:**

- Establish redress systems and support services for women victims of violence
- Accelerate building and rehabilitation of girls' schools to be adequate, accessible and safe
- Public education campaigns about the legal age of marriage

The NAPWA was welcomed by women's rights organisations when it was agreed in 2008. However, for some time critics have been questioning whether it has really been implemented across government.<sup>xxii</sup> In early 2011, the slow pace of progress was acknowledged when the NAPWA was identified for support under a National Priority Programme (NPP) named 'Capacity Development for Implementation of the NAPWA'.<sup>xxiii</sup> The NPP describes implementation of the NAPWA as 'slow and insignificant' and states that most initiatives spurred by the NAPWA are 'done in projectized, piecemeal and unsustainable manners that do not create over-arching, long-term and meaningful impacts on the lives of women.' However, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has only secured a fraction of the \$30 million needed to deliver on the NPP, which is itself just a first step towards full implementation of the NAPWA.

The 2009 EVAW law is regarded as a big step forward in support of the protection of women's rights. It criminalises over 20 acts of violence against women and specifies punishments for perpetrators. A 2011 report by the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)<sup>xxiv</sup> found that judicial officials have begun to use the law, which is a promising development. However, the research revealed that there is low awareness of the law among women and members of the judicial system, that it is being unevenly enforced and that harmful traditional practices remain pervasive.

*'There cannot be national security without women's security, there can be no peace when women's lives are fraught with violence, when our children can't go to schools, when we cannot step outside for fear of acid attacks'<sup>xxv</sup>*

UNAMA further found that a majority of cases of violence against women are processed outside the formal justice system – through mediation, pressure for withdrawal of complaints, and by elders. These mechanisms do not respect the rights of women or comply with the EVAW law. In practice, their use means that perpetrators of rape and domestic violence get away with unacceptably light punishments, women are forced back into dangerous, sometimes life-threatening situations, and are often themselves accused of 'moral crimes'. This demonstrates the considerable distance there is still to travel in entrenching the law into the norms and institutions of Afghanistan.

*'Moral crimes' are primarily zina (sexual intercourse outside marriage) which is a crime under the Penal Code and Sharia law and 'running away' or 'intention to commit zina' which are not crimes under Afghan law. Afghan authorities often accuse rape victims or women fleeing domestic violence of zina or 'intention to commit zina'*

Women remain subject to commonplace violence at home and in public spaces, a situation that could well worsen as the date of the troop withdrawal approaches. Indeed, increases in attacks especially on girls' schools and women human rights defenders are often an early warning sign of deteriorating security in a region or district. The NAPWA and EVAW Law contain provisions for training of security forces and police in preventing and responding to this core threat, but again these have not been fully implemented.

Full implementation of both the NAPWA and the EVAW law are essential prerequisites not only for creating a future free from violence against women, but also to securing vital development gains for the whole country. However both these mechanisms lack the funding and political backing required to enable them to realise their objectives.

It is challenging to assess exactly what the resource needs are to tackle violence against women in Afghanistan, due to a lack of transparent and publicly available information on these and other related government initiatives. An estimate prepared for ActionAid by an independent consultant concludes that the minimum level of funding required to relaunch the NAPWA and enable progressive implementation of all provisions of the EVAW law would be at least \$90m over five years. Without this level of resources, neither mechanism will be able to do its job, and violence against women and girls will continue to undermine international and national efforts to create secure and economically successful Afghanistan.

### iii. Tokyo Outcomes

ActionAid welcomes the announcement in July 2011 by the Australian Government of \$17.7 million to reduce retribution attacks following female participation in society as their contribution to reducing violence against women in Afghanistan. We look forward to seeing the details of how this funding will be implemented and in particular how Australia can play a key role in bringing other stakeholders to similar levels of commitment.

**Indeed, putting violence against women and girls at the top of the agenda would show the world that members of the coalition remain resolute in their determination to ensure a better future for Afghanistan's women, just as they promised ten years ago.**

However, the main discussions at Tokyo focused on how Afghanistan can achieve a stable fiscal position and achieve steady economic growth to fund its own development. Key stakeholders such as the World Bank acknowledged the probable difficulties ahead:



*'Political uncertainty and insecurity could undermine Afghanistan's transition and development prospects... International experience and Afghanistan's history after the Soviet military withdrawal in 1989 demonstrate that violent fluctuations in aid, especially abrupt aid cut-offs, are extremely damaging and destabilizing.'*<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The most damaging impact of the withdrawal will be the large financing gap created by the fact that Afghanistan will have to take on massive security expenditures so far borne by foreign military forces. Estimates suggest that without additional external support, the funding gap will climb quickly to around \$8.4 billion for the financial year 2014/15 and would be above \$7bn right up to 2021/22. Even though it is expected that the international community will make substantial commitments to Afghanistan's continued development it is unlikely that the gap will be entirely filled, leading to 'extremely difficult and possibly destabilising trade-offs', according to the World Bank. **In the effort to distribute increasingly scarce funds across security and development needs, tackling violence against women stands a high chance of being overlooked unless specific provision is made for it.**

A further challenge is presented by the drive to provide more aid directly through the Government of Afghanistan. ActionAid supports the use of aid modalities like budget support, but is concerned that the Afghanistan has not yet made tackling violence against women and girls a top priority. There are also some services – for example the provision of shelters for women fleeing domestic violence – that may be more appropriately delivered by women's rights organisations that can more easily earn the trust of communities. Women's rights organisations report that they struggle for funds, and have to make difficult choices between maintaining services and being able to engage in advocacy to demand that government lives up to its obligations<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

*'Since last year we have been desperately seeking money for our shelter [for women fleeing violence]. We are looking for donors who can give us multi-year funding because the shelter is a huge project and the only option is to close it if you don't have funds. Where should these victims who are at risk with their children go? Maybe they will live on the street, go for prostitution, trafficking or be exposed to other kinds of violence.'*

**There should be specific provision for civil society organisations – including women's rights organisations – both for accountability work and to provide services where government is unable or unwilling to do so.**

#### iv. Conclusion and recommendations

Afghanistan finds itself once more at a crossroads. Women have known improvements to their lives before, only to see them erode away due to political expediency and lack of funds. That must not be allowed to happen again.

##### **The Government of Australia should:**

- I. Contribute to efforts that ensure that tackling violence against women and girls is a priority for the GoIRA and donors and both are mutually accountable for achieving results
- II. As a first step, Australia should immediately commit its fair share of the required \$30m for three years for the NPP 'Capacity development to implement the NAPWA'
- III. Make binding guarantees to ensure full funding for the NAPWA commitments on violence against women and girls and LEVAW
- IV. Make provision so that women's rights organisations can access funding directly to provide services and engage in advocacy and accountability work around the NAPWA and LEVAW
- V. Push to establish a transparent process that shows how the NAPWA and LEVAW are being implemented and financed

### 3. Food Security and Agricultural Led Development

#### i. Achievements to date

AusAID points to the following top line achievements through Australia's work on rural development in Afghanistan:

- contributing to improved rural livelihoods and food security through research in wheat and maize productivity , and improvements in rural water supply and sanitation, irrigation, and rural infrastructure, and access to microfinance
- supporting the provision of emergency food supplies and humanitarian assistance for vulnerable populations in Afghanistan through mechanisms aimed at addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity. Australia has also supported the safe return and protection of refugees, ongoing mine action programs, and the provision of humanitarian air services in Afghanistan.

However, as noted in the recent report on the work in Uruzgan by The Liaison Office<sup>1</sup>, the challenges for agricultural development remain significant:

*An international NGO representative noted that, "There are still a lot of needs and too few organizations working in this area, although more opportunities exist."<sup>109</sup> Another NGO representative was critical of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (DAIL) for the lack of progress, adding that while the DAIL may have "better qualified staff members now, they still have very limited funding."<sup>110</sup> Another noted, "Agriculture needs more funding, it needs continuous support, it needs an extension of services, and it needs to be linked to value chains."<sup>111</sup> Indeed, improvements in agriculture will only be fully realized if there are also improvements in other key areas, in particular the transportation sector, which farmers rely on to get produce to market.*

These concerns are not restricted to Uruzgan province but are also reflected in the analysis completed by a consultant on behalf of ActionAid Afghanistan in September 2011<sup>2</sup> that focused on the experience of Northern provinces where ActionAid Afghanistan does much of its work. The following summary of the issues and recommendations for donors are drawn from this recent study.

#### ii. Context and on-going challenges

##### Current situation

Agriculture means a lot for economic growth and food security in Afghanistan. Currently, about 85% of the country's population live in rural areas mainly surviving by agriculture and animal husbandry. Agriculture accounts for up to half of GDP, but its contributions vary considerably with the weather.

Managing land for agriculture purposes has been a critical issue in Afghanistan as only eight million hectares of land has been arable. Of this around 5.3 million hectares of land was irrigable. However, due to water scarcity and unpredictability of the snowfall, only around half of this irrigable land was actually irrigated. Meanwhile, the land reform process has not helped poor farmers access land for agriculture. On the other hand land grabbing has been a big hurdle in this process. For example there are official claims that approximately four million hectares of land have been seized by 'powerful' people backed by corrupt governance and a lack of proper land management procedures.

<sup>1</sup> Uruzgan – 18 months after the Dutch/Australian leadership handover- TLO April 2012

<sup>2</sup> See attachment 1. No Agriculture, No Food – An ActionAid Study



The thirty years of war has caused a massive downturn in agricultural productivity. Although the sector was not very productive even before these war years, it has not been much better during the past 10 years, as it is highly dependent on the weather and a high proportion of land is rain fed. In 2011 there was a marked productivity drop due to drastic drought conditions. Overall cereal production is estimated to be 25% below the 2010 level and 17% below the average volume of 5.2 million MT (2005 to 2009). Cereal production in 2011 is forecast to reach 4.3 million MT, which includes 3.3 million MT of wheat (77%) and barley 305,000 MT (7%).

Lack of proper planning and risk mitigation measures for the agriculture sector caused a food insecurity crisis in 2011. In 2012 there will be a scarcity of cereals due to crop failures; and as per the MAIL compared with 2010, decreases in wheat area and yield are estimated at 14% and 17%. As a result of these decreases, domestic production of wheat in 2011 is expected to be 28% lower than in 2010. In 2011, the area planted with rain fed wheat was 26% less than in 2010 and its production is expected to decrease by 77%.

### **Agriculture since 2001**

There has been a dramatic downturn of agricultural production during the past ten years due to a lack of proper programming and adequate support, leaving everything to depend upon the weather. As can be observed there is a cereal production decrease every other year but no large irrigation scheme for increasing agricultural productivity and increasing resilience against drought has been put in place. The total cereal requirements in MY 2011/12 is estimated at 6.3 million MT, which means that the cereal shortfall in MY 2011/12 are going to be about 2 million MT. Despite having a good harvest horticulture production has not been able to support poor farmers' income and help those coping with food insecurity due to crop failure.

In the last ten years animal husbandry and livestock production have been dependent on natural grazing land with little investment in Afghanistan. The lack of rain has affected animal husbandry in the country; as per MAIL's observations'. The net far-reaching effect of these developments will be a serious lack of fodder and supplementary feeding (hay and straw) in the winter. Immediate measures are needed to mitigate this serious problem.

After 10 years of direct intervention by the international community there is still little recognition of how critical Afghanistan's agricultural sector is for the development of this country. Food security and distribution continues to be a major problem and both are sources of vulnerability for the Afghani people. A Food Security Risk Index of 196 countries released on 31 August by Maplecroft, rates Afghanistan number nine. Both agriculture and food distribution are caught up in the problems raised by Afghanistan's dependence on opium cultivation, extortion and corruption in aid and transport operations at every level, as well as manipulation by national and local power brokers.

On-budget and off-budget efforts of the donor community and GIRA have not been able to solve the major problems of agriculture development and food security in Afghanistan after 10 years of intervention. Still many Afghan farmers do not have enough land on a per capita basis to feed their families – much less earn a living. As agricultural development projects and programs reach part of the population in different provinces, most of them do not have the desired result. More work is needed to ensure that aid does not only benefit some section of the rich farmers at the expense of the most vulnerable and poor landless farmers, land labourers and women farmers.

In 2011 as per MAIL research, approximately 200,000 families were hit by drought nationwide, and MAIL attempted to distribute 50,000 tonnes of cereal to drought-affected people. While this shortage of food happens due to every other year's drought the GIRA and donors community have done little

to prevent and fight this disaster in a systemic way. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) efforts must be integrated into humanitarian programmes and long term agricultural sector development. Agriculture support has not been able to address the major agricultural structural problems caused by drought, weather, terrain, distribution, etc.

### **Aid, Security and Opium**

On a macroeconomic level, strong growth will be required to increase per capita incomes and to provide the necessary investment to boost employment and income necessary to reduce poverty. Poverty remains a persistent problem in Afghanistan. The average per capita monthly consumption for people living in poverty is only 950 Afs (or US\$ 19.60). As Afghanistan's economy is heavily dependent on donor contributions a number of donor countries have so far failed to implement projects they had promised at the Kabul International Conference –and due to the recent issues with a private bank, the Kabul Bank, these contributions are still outstanding. The international community halted part of its financial aid to Afghanistan following disagreements between the GoIRA and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the financial crisis in the Kabul Bank.

Aid has been heavily skewed towards security in recent years rather than on development and this approach has not prevented a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. Based on MoF statements of all aid, 51% has been spent on security and the rest 41% has been spent on road construction, agriculture, solidarity programmes, power supply, reconstruction of airports and some other sectors. However, despite intensive concentration on the security sector through aid budgets, the Afghan government lacks a strong defensive security system able to ensure the peace and stability of the country.

Natural disasters such as drought and flood and illicit poppy cultivation appear as major challenges for agricultural development in the country; but the mechanisms of dealing with these challenges have been under question. Drought and other natural disasters such as flood and pest infestations have caused major food insecurity in the country due to crop failure every year. However, as this problem has existed since the start of international involvement in the last ten years and billions of dollars have been sunk into different agricultural programs, durable long-term solutions for natural disaster management such as tackling issues of drought remain a major concern for people.

In 2011 there was a gap of 137 million USD between the humanitarian communities' projection to fight the drought and the actual reimbursements of the donors. Meanwhile, there is a huge gap between funding and actual requirements.

During the last decade, GoIRA and the international community have claimed their highest commitment is to opium eradication. But despite having a damaging impact on illicit agriculture production, the opium problem is causing agriculture backwardness and promoting poverty in Afghanistan and all intentions and claims for fighting it has had very little impact. Beside the alternative livelihood measures, agriculture should provide a special alternative during the poppy eradication processes instead of rapid and unrealistic policies.

### **Major challenges for the agriculture sector:**

- There is little land for agriculture use and the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan means that vast tracts of land cannot be irrigated or cultivated.
- Land reform for agricultural support programs has been failing due to corrupt procedures and lack of control.
- Thirty two years of war has meant that the agricultural sector has been neglected completely changing from a major source of exports to subsistence level production

- There is lack of prioritization for agriculture infrastructure including the irrigation and canals for securing harvest and crops.
- The conflict has prevented the growth and development of indigenous techniques while traditional knowledge has been lost and new technology and knowledge is also rare.
- Shrinking acreage, silted irrigation channels, lack of inputs and stagnation in techniques has reduced agricultural productivity.
- Current efforts in this sector are scattered, uncoordinated and have a piecemeal rather than sectoral approach based on a broader vision.
- The big investment required to push Afghanistan's agriculture out of the cycle of stagnation has not been forthcoming, and centralized administration has caused a lack of proper planning and implementation at different levels of the country.
- The resources and inputs required for farming have not been made available leaving farmers to rely on exploitative practices in the private sector, while the scant attention paid to agriculture has focused on productivity, there has been little or no focus on post -product ion processes.
- No strong alternatives have been planned and implemented to reduce poppy cultivation.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Despite recent interest in the role of mineral extraction as an answer to Afghanistan's economic woes it is agriculture that must be at the heart of any sustainable and equitable economic development of Afghanistan.

ActionAid's work <sup>3</sup> focuses on women and vulnerable farmers looking to promote sustainable agriculture, build agricultural networks and foster climate and disaster resilience. These are the areas that badly need more donor support and government attention. Afghanistan's economy will only flourish when this kind of pro-poor, long-term, and climate smart agricultural development is allowed to succeed.

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<sup>3</sup> See attached AA Afghanistan project briefs.

## Regarding Agriculture,

### Donors should:

- I. Focus agricultural programming on the actual requirements of poor farmers and women with long-term scope and consistency in coordination with other actors.
- II. Seek and include the expectations of women farmers into agriculture policies to maintain their full participation in the process of policy making and implementation.
- III. Donors' commitments to fund MAIL's priority programs should met in time to tackle major food insecurity constraints caused every other year due to drought or every year's flood. Those projects that have been prioritized and not funded should be.
- IV. Plan, in coordination with the MAIL and technical support of NGOs, new drought and flood prone programs to reduce the devastating risk of such natural disasters.
- V. Facilitate more opportunities for civil society in Afghanistan working in agriculture to help the GoIRA and the donor community to reach people in need, especially in remote locations
- VI. Support government's role in leading the development programs for the sector as per the ANDS in promoting indigenous knowledge and practices and aligning these with the modern techniques and equipment.
- VII. Support Government in the processes of need assessment, budgeting, resource transfer and implementation.
- VIII. Promote and support government to mobilise domestic resources (taxation) to fund recurrent expenses and use donor money only for the development of the sector.
- IX. Expand diversified farming options to discourage poppy cultivation.
- X. Support action against high profile people involved in the trade and trafficking of opium and opium poppies.
- XI. Continue to support the government's focus on economic infrastructural development including in agriculture and animal husbandry as all other sectors are highly dependent on these activities.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/cms/uploads/images/Constitution/The%20Constitution.pdf>

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#### Violence Against Women:

<sup>ii</sup> National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA): The Government's main vehicle for implementing policies and commitments to advance the status of women 2007-2017, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: <http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/uploads/National%20Action%20Plan%20for%20the%20Women%20of%20Afghanistan%202007%20to%202017.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Kirk Semple, 'Afghan Women Slowly Gaining Protection', New York Times, 2 March 2009: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/world/asia/03shelter.html>

<sup>iv</sup> United Nations, Women's Indicators and Statistics database ([www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)): [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2381\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2381_E.htm)

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