

Norwegian NGOs in Post-Taliban Afghanistan: Review and Lessons Learned

Are Knudsen

with

Hamidullah Natiq and Sadiqa Basiri

R 2005: 11



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Foreword

This review has been commissioned by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The objectives of the review are listed in the Terms of Reference (ToR), which are included as a separate document (Appendix 2). The evaluation team consisted of three persons: Are Knudsen (team leader), Hamidullah Natiq (team member) and Sadiqa Bashiri (team member). The team was complemented by two NORAD staff members, Elisabeth Sollner and Ivar Evensmo, who took part in the first and second part of the field visit to Afghanistan respectively.

The review team would like to thank staff at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kabul, in particular Nina Schelderup (First Secretary, Development Cooperation), who expertly handled logistical and practical problems in Kabul and in relation to the field trips. The team also wishes to thank Johan-Lorentz Wigand (First Secretary) and Thomas Finstad (Attaché) for accompanying us on the field trips.

The team would also like to thank staff of Norwegian Church Aid in Kabul, especially Per Westborg (Resident Representative) and Magna Torvund (Program Coordinator), who coordinated our busy meeting schedule. In Norway, the initial contact was handled by Arne Sæveraas (Programme Coordinator), who organised the first planning meeting in Oslo. In Oslo Geir Valle (Senior Advisor), Gaim Kebreab (team leader) and Ragnhild Olafsson (accountant) were interviewed for this report.

Likewise the team would like to thank the staff of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, especially Astrid Everine Sletten (Country Director) and Zamarai Ahmadzai (Deputy Director), who organised our stay and field visits. In Norway, the initial planning contact was handled by Ronny Hansen (General Secretary), who was also interviewed for this report.

We would also like to thank the many NGO partners for meeting with us in Kabul (Appendix 1). A special thanks also to the representatives of the Afghan Transitional Government who took time from busy schedules to meet with us. We are also grateful to the NCA and NAC staff members, too many to be mentioned individually, who made our stay in Kabul and in the field both efficient and pleasant. Finally, Are Knudsen would like to thank Astri Suhrke (CMI) for stimulating discussions. The usual disclaimer applies.

Bergen/Fantoft, 28 February 2005

AK

Executive summary

Afghanistan has within the span of three years moved from a complex political emergency to a nascent state-building process, a process that is not yet completed. The Afghanistan case is therefore important for learning how foreign aid and foreign NGOs can best assist a fledgling government in promoting peace and rebuilding the country. The report reviews the policies, programmes and projects of two Norwegian NGOs in Afghanistan, the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), during the difficult transitional period 2000–04. The report is based on a desk review, interviews with representatives of the organisations in Norway and Afghanistan, their Afghan programme partners, officials in the Transitional Government of Afghanistan (TGA) and field visits to project sites in the Bamyan and Badakshan provinces. The report is divided into four separate but interlinked parts. The first section gives a general background to the Afghan context and the overall political, economic and bureaucratic situation facing the Norwegian NGOs. The second part is a short organisational profile of NCA and the NAC based on the documents they supplied for desk review. The third part presents the findings from Afghanistan and includes recommendations to the organisations and, in one instance, to Norad/MFA. The final section presents the lessons learned as well as the conclusions. The methodology used for this review is found in the appendices (Appendix 3).

The main focus in this review is the Norwegian organisations themselves and the Afghan context of their development work. The report consequently contains less information about the Norwegian policy and strategy process in the organisations and those of the funding agencies (Norad/MFA). The two organisations under review are different in their size, organisational set-up, funding and programme profile, but have been evaluated according to similar professional standards. The report contains nineteen recommendations to the organisations and covers their projects, programmes, policies and, in one instance, the Norad/MFA funding regime. The most important findings and lessons learned are highlighted below.

In general the report finds that only minor policy changes took place during the period 2001–04, which is in part explained by the slow and incremental state-building process that characterised this period as well as the broad organisational mandate applying to the organisations' work in Afghanistan. This meant that only towards the end of this period have the organisations initiated policy review processes that are meant to guide future development activity in Afghanistan. *The lesson to draw from this is that policy change takes time and will only pick up once the political situation has stabilised enough to make programme changes feasible. If policy changes are required during post-war transition, they need to be supported by strong economic incentives (see below).*

One finding in this review has been that there was considerable continuity in the NGOs' project portfolio during the period (2000–04). The Norwegian NGOs have to a considerable degree continued their broad-based development approach and only during the latter half of the period is some form of programme specialisation evident. There is also a strong emphasis on construction and rehabilitation projects. *The lesson to draw from this is that there are a number of organisational, staff and project level constraints that make organisations continue with established programmes even after the conditions that gave rise to them have changed.*

The transitional phase in Afghanistan presented the NGOs with a new and rapidly changing environment; new development actors arrived on the scene as did a large number of donors disbursing huge amounts of emergency relief aid. The Norwegian NGOs were, in other words, subject to a very challenging environment that presented them with multiple

organisational challenges that strained their administrative capacity. *The lesson to draw from this is that the uncertainty that characterises the transitional phase is a disincentive to undertaking major policy and programme changes, changes that could later disadvantage the organisation or lead to financial losses.*

The review has shown that there is a difference in policy outlook between the Norwegian NGOs and that of their Norwegian donors (Norad/MFA). The former are bound first of all by their organisational mandate and country policies while the latter are bound by the goals of Norwegian development policies as well as foreign policy goals in the region or country in question. *This suggests that during a transitional phase, there is a need for closer policy dialogue between the parties and a need to communicate Norwegian policy goals and priorities more clearly in order to avoid misunderstandings and misgivings.*

One finding from this review is that it is not only the political and security situation in the host country that determines the project portfolio, but also the political priorities among donors in Norway that in turn decide the level and type of funding being made available to Norwegian NGOs in Afghanistan. During the period 2000–04 there has been a number of key changes in Norwegian bilateral aid to Afghanistan. *The changes made to the funding regimes were meant to strengthen the role of the Afghan government in development (through the ARTF) and the funding made available to the NGOs. The decision to support the ARTF is supported by current research, but the new funding regime for the Norwegian NGOs may inadvertently have delayed planned policy and programme changes.*

The review finds that the tripartite funding regime (frame, gap and hum-ass.) has inadvertently been a disincentive for the NGOs to undertake policy and programme changes. More specifically, this is because the tripartite funding regime puts a heavy administrative workload on the NGOs, promotes short-term projects and mixes short- and long-term objectives in a manner detrimental to the latter. Moreover, the very large gap and humanitarian assistance funding during the first phase of the period under review (2001–02) was an incentive to work with traditional development assistance and emergency relief and a disincentive to beginning a process of organisational restructuring and policy change. *The lesson to draw from this is that funding regimes that mix long-term and short-term policy goals may inadvertently promote the latter at the expense of the former. For the gap funds especially, the huge discrepancy between the amount applied for and that awarded suggests that closer dialogue is needed between Norad/MFA and the NGOs.*

As shown in the report, the Afghan reconstruction process has to a large degree been mandated to the NGO sector. More specifically, the state and the NGO sector have chosen a division of labour that, broadly speaking, mandates planning (countrywide and sector-wise) to the ministries and project level implementation to the NGOs following competitive bidding (the NSP is an example of this approach). This division of labour runs the risk of undermining the legitimacy of the Afghan state because the results are credited to the NGO sector. *The general lesson to learn from this is that for weak states with a rudimentary planning and implementation capacity, government service delivery and planning capacity must be built alongside the active participation of the NGO sector.*

Post-war states such as Afghanistan typically suffer from severe security problems that prevent service delivery in sections of the country, typically those areas where assistance is most badly needed. In turn, this lack of service delivery buttresses the power of local warlords and insurgents whose support in the local population is bolstered by the absence of help from the central government. *The general lesson to learn from this is that in weak states, service delivery should early on target insecure areas to prevent them from becoming bases of civil unrest and warlordism. Because food aid is easily abused and can create aid dependence, NGOs are advised to prioritise health, education and simple infrastructure projects.*

In Afghanistan, the many indigenous NGOs form the backbone of service delivery, either independently or as partners of foreign NGOs such as NCA and the NAC. With increased demand for their services, their numbers have mushroomed as have their funding sources. Many of them now attract funding from many different donors, yet there is little donor co-ordination. Moreover, their implementing capacity is usually not given due consideration and capacity building is not prioritised. *The general lesson to learn from this is that in the early post-war phase, indigenous NGOs and their staff should be prioritised for capacity building. To accomplish this objective, better donor co-ordination is needed to ensure that NGOs are not being “overstretched” and have the necessary capacity and expertise to carry our projects successfully (and safely).*

Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| AACA | Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority |
| ACBAR | Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief |
| ACT | Action of Churches Together |
| ANCB | Afghan NGOs Coordinating Bureau |
| ARTF | Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund |
| ASG | Afghan Support Group |
| ATA | Afghanistan Transitional Authority |
| ATA-AP | Anti Tuberculosis Association – Afg. Programme |
| AWSDC | Afghan Women Skills Development Centre |
| BPHS | Basic Package of Health Services |
| CARE | CARE International |
| CAWC | Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee |
| CDC | Community Development Council |
| CG | Consultative Group |
| CPAU | Cooperation for Peace and Unity |
| DACAAR | Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees |
| EOC | Emergency Obstetrics Care |
| ENNA | European Network for NGOs in Afghanistan |
| EPI | Expanded Program for Immunization |
| EU | European Union |
| FFE | Food-for-Education |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| MCH | Mother-and-Child Health Clinics |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MIWRE | Ministry of Water Resources and Environment |
| ML&SA | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| MM&D | Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoP | Ministry of Planning |
| MRRD | Ministry of Rural Development and Rehabilitation |
| NAC | Norwegian Afghanistan Committee |
| NCA | Norwegian Church Aid |
| NDB | National Development Budget |
| NDF | National Development Framework |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| Norad | Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation |
| NPO/RRAA | Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan |
| NSP | National Solidarity Program |
| NVP | National Vulnerability Program |
| PCP | Principled Common Programming |
| PDC | Provincial Development Council |
| PPA | Performance Based Partnership Agreement |
| PRT | Provincial Reconstruction Team |
| SCA | Swedish Committee for Afghanistan |
| SF | Strategic Framework for Afghanistan |
| TBAAs | Traditional Birth Attendants |

| | |
|---------|--|
| TGA | Transitional Government of Afghanistan |
| UNAMA | United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| UTSTEIN | Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Norway |
| WB | World Bank |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

Section I: Background

Summary: This section provides a general background to the Afghan post-war situation, the NGO sector's role in rebuilding the country, the problems of aid coordination and the importance of not strengthening the NGO sector at the expense of state institutions.

Introduction

Afghanistan has been ravaged by war, civil war and, since 2002, post-war conflict (Figure 1: Map of Afghanistan). The country scores low on all development indices and currently ranks as number 169 of 174 countries covered by the Human Development Index (HDI). The country had the highest maternal and infant mortality rates and the lowest life expectancy in the world. Widespread human rights violations have been committed by all parties to the conflict. The country is also the second largest producer of opium in the world.

In 1996, the Taliban forces took control of most of the country and soon the new regime imposed harsh restriction on donors and the NGO sector, including a ban on female aid workers, restrictions that further reduced donor interest in the country. In 1995, total aid to Afghanistan from the international community was down to about US\$ 200 million. At the time, the donors did not coordinate on a systematic basis and there were no agreed principles of engagement and operation within Afghanistan (Kreczko 2003: p. 239). From 1997, there was a deliberate move to implement new coordination mechanisms for humanitarian relief and develop a countrywide assistance strategy.

Following the fall of the Taliban regime during the autumn of 2001, Afghanistan was handed over to an interim government lead by Chairman (now president) Hamid Karzai. Chief among the tasks awaiting the new government was rebuilding the country and implementing a functional state bureaucracy that could assume the enormous task of rebuilding the country. The new state-building and peace-building process has served to attract new donors and international assistance to Afghanistan has increased enormously during the past few years. Nonetheless, the interim government is cash-strapped and heavily dependent on foreign aid. Moreover, opium (poppy) cultivation has rebounded and the narcotics trade is currently a major part of the informal economy as well as financing the many warlords that control the Afghan countryside.

To summarise, Afghanistan has within the span of three years moved from a complex political emergency to a nascent state-building process, a process that is not yet completed (see Figure 2: Timeline). The Afghanistan case is therefore important for learning how foreign aid and foreign NGOs can best assist a fledgling government in promoting peace and rebuilding the country. Thus, the scope of this review is threefold: the lessons learned from post-war aid to Afghanistan, the NGO sector's role in post-war nation-building and NCA, and NCA's specific contributions to rebuilding post-war Afghanistan.

Figure 2: Timeline

| | | |
|---|-------------|---|
| • | 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Taliban regime ousted, Nov. 2001 – Bonn Agreement, Nov-Dec. 2001 – Afghan Interim Authority (ATA), Dec. 2001 |
| • | 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emergency Loya Jirga, June 2002 – Interim Afghanistan Transitional Authority (ATA), July 2002 |
| • | 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Constitution Loya Jirga, Dec. 2003 – Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) – National Development Framework (NDF) and National Development Budget (NDB) |
| • | 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Constitution passed, Jan. 2004 – Presidential elections, Oct. 2004 |

Government policy guidelines

The heavy influx of aid money and donors after 2002 strained the capacity of the interim government to control the aid flow and added to the importance of instituting some form of aid coordination (Strand 2002). In February 2002, the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA) was formed to “attract, guide, facilitate, and coordinate the flow of international, humanitarian, reconstruction and economic assistance to Afghanistan” (quoted in Strand 2002: p. 10). In April 2002, the Afghan government drafted the National Development Framework (NDF) and National Development Budget (NDB). Both were formulated to guide short-term rehabilitation and long-term development of the country after war, and especially, to match the needs identified by newly formed Afghan ministries with the appropriate aid/donor organisations (Suhrke, Harpviken, and Strand 2004: p. 20).

The NDF document contains sections especially relevant to the goals of this review. The document stresses that the recipient country must be in “the driver's seat” and that donor-funded projects must be anchored in coherent government programmes (NDF nd: p. 5-6). The NDF emphasises that the NGOs need a strong coordination mechanism to avoid duplicating relief and rehabilitation efforts (NDF nd: p. 17). The document makes clear that the interim government is not yet equipped to assume this control function but is working to build implementation capacity in line ministries and develop an “architecture for the policies and strategies” needed to reach this goal (NDF nd: p. 15, 26). Among the interim government's sectoral priorities are the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, education, health care, sustainable livelihoods, demining and demobilisation, and formulating social policy. The priority areas for physical rehabilitation cover water and waste treatment, including urban and rural drinking water, irrigation networks etc.

NGO sector

Traditionally the NGO sector has been “freewheeling” with only limited internal coordination. During the civil war in Afghanistan, the NGOs had little incentive to seek cooperation with the parties to the conflict, unless this was necessary in order to undertake a programme (the NAC’s long-term work in Ghazni is an example). In general, there was a tendency for NGOs to work “atomistically”, to give high priority to operational independence and to avoid being held accountable by the host government or regime. In order to operate, however, some of them cultivated ties with local military leaders (commanders and warlords) or local authorities which during times of war made programmes feasible through their security guarantees. Because of the massive problems afflicting war-torn Afghanistan, aid organisations have traditionally confronted them on a very broad front. It is common that an NGO is involved in a number of different projects relating to different sectors of the ailing Afghan society. In general, there is an emphasis on physical rehabilitation and construction (roads, schools and health clinics), education (literacy, training) and health (clinics, immunisation and basic health care). Some organisations also include environmental rehabilitation (afforestation etc.) as a programme objective. In recent years, peace efforts and peace-building have also been added to the portfolio with the aim of strengthening civil society. The tendency for NGOs to address many of the multiple development problems facing Afghanistan means that they will need to draw on a very broad range of technical and managerial expertise. This has usually been solved either by partnering with specialised NGOs having this competence (the NCA model) or by building this competence into the organisation step by step over many years (the NAC approach). In either case this means that the NGOs are not in a position to change programmes overnight as that would mandate major changes in staff, partners or both. It is therefore expected that changes in the NGOs’ portfolio and programmes (this also applies to the NGO sector more generally) will be slow to come about even when faced with a new context for their work. In Afghanistan the state-building process has been incremental and only recently has the transitional Afghan government (TGA) been able to function properly (Figure 2: Timeline).

Since 2002, there has been increased competition for donor money and a narrowing scope for smaller NGOs. Currently, more and more projects are being put out to tender whose scale makes them too large for small and medium-sized NGOs (NAC 2003b: p. 4). In sum this means that the funding situation under which NGOs operate is rapidly changing. With a new interim government in place in Kabul in 2002, there was a large influx of INGOs, which inflated salaries and drove up house rents. The presence of new INGOs further narrowed the playing field for small and medium-sized NGOs such as the NAC and NCA (NCA 2004a). To what degree have the NGOs under review nevertheless been able to take advantage of the new political, social and funding situation to initiate changes to their policies and project portfolios? To what degree are these changes evident in their current programmes, policy goals and objectives? This is discussed in section III.

Aid and NGO coordination

Traditionally, the aid coordination system in Afghanistan has been weak and fragmented (Strand 2002). During the period 1997–2001 measures were introduced to increase the coherence in humanitarian assistance in what was then Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. This included the senior level forum known as the Afghan Support Group (ASG), Principled Common Programming (PCP) aimed at integrating individual programmes into a countrywide assistance strategy and finally the UN initiative known as the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (SF), which spelled out the objectives and strategies for UN assistance to Afghanistan (Kreczko 2003). The ASG allowed senior government, the UN and NGO actors to tackle common problems related to gender, narcotics and security in Afghanistan. The PCP could not produce a comprehensive assistance plan during the first 4 years of its existence but a start in this direction was made. The achievements of the SF were similarly mixed, but did

provide an overall framework for (UN) engagement in Afghanistan and a relationship between assistance and peace efforts.

As mentioned, coordination of the NGO sector has traditionally been weak in Afghanistan. With the rapid increase in new business opportunities and the new “aid bazaar” in Afghanistan, the number of NGOs has mushroomed. Currently, it is estimated that there are close to about 3,000 registered NGOs in Afghanistan compared to about 250 in mid-2001 (Strand 2002: p. 8). These numbers show the challenges facing NGO coordination and why coordination is now even weaker than before. This problem has been compounded by the fact that the NGOs are organised in different coordinating bodies, the most prominent being the Agency Coordination Body of Afghan Relief (ACBAR) with a member base consisting mostly of international/foreign NGOs and the Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB) whose members, as the name suggests, are predominantly Afghan NGOs. The goals of the two organisations overlap but the ANCB is more vocal in its criticism of the INGOs and the multilateral organisations, their salary levels and many “perks”. This is reflected in the contested role of foreign NGOs in Afghanistan and the Minister of Planning’s call for stricter NGO legislation. The row over the NGOs’ role has meant that the long-awaited NGO legislation has not been passed by the cabinet. The details of this complex matter are beyond the scope of this review, but underscore the problems facing NGOs in Afghanistan. The main problem for the Norwegian NGOs has not been the current lack of NGO legislation but the possible restrictions and limitations the new legislation may impose on NGOs in the future. The objective of sorting out the genuine NGOs from those which want to ensure access to development budgets for private gain is supported by most NGOs. Since mid-2004, the European NGOs (NCA included) have worked to establish a European Network for NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) for sharing information, cooperating on advocacy and coordinating activities. Moreover, there have been some improvements in NGO coordination, especially at the provincial level, after this was mandated to the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which also engages in capacity building at the local government level (UNAMA Online).

Since 2002, a range of new policy measures and policy instruments have been introduced in order to promote the coordination and standardisation of service delivery, especially in the health and education sector. The new Performance Based Partnership Agreement (PPA) model means that instead of many NGOs running a clinic or hospital in the same area, health service delivery in whole districts is put up for bidding among a selection of shortlisted NGOs having the necessary skills and expertise in this sector. The successful bidder then takes over the responsibility for running all health facilities according to minimal standards such as the new Basic Package of Health Services (BHPS) (see Ministry of Health 2003). The major governmental community development programme is the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), whose main objective is to empower poor communities to plan, manage, finance and monitor their own development programmes. The NSP is managed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD 2004) and aims to provide all rural villages in Afghanistan (approximately 20,000) with basic health, sanitation and educational services and facilities during the next three to four years. The major part of the construction work is contracted to the NGO sector using a PPA approach covering districts or “clusters”.

The political situation in Afghanistan changed rapidly after 2001 and the ousting of the Taliban regime but setting up the new administrative and bureaucratic structure only began in earnest in 2003 (see, TIMELINE). The change of power in Afghanistan and the presence of a transitional government presented NGOs and the NGO sector with a new challenge. As already described, the interim government has tended to treat the NGOs and the NGO sector with scepticism and would like to assume greater control over their financial assets and limit their operational freedom. There is, hence, a mutual distrust between the NGO sector and sections within the government based on a conflict of interests (see NCA 2000c: p. 13). Thus, a major issue in this review is to what degree NCA and the NAC have taken steps to

coordinate their programmes with other NGOs as well as the interim government and its ministries and agencies. This is discussed in section III of this report.

Aid to post-war Afghanistan

A major question in this review is the role of aid in post-war situations. This question in particular concerns two related parts of bilateral aid, namely aid to the NGO sector and state-to-state aid. It is important to note that in the period 2000–02, Norwegian bilateral aid to Afghanistan did not include state-to-state aid. Since 2002, state-to-state aid has taken priority with Norwegian funds being channelled through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). In 2003, the Norwegian contribution to the fund amounted to NOK 145.3 million. Since 2001, the NGO sector's funding has also increased (see section III). These changes are important considering that the Afghan state was traditionally a weak one, with the government unable to create a monopoly on power (Wimmer and Schetter 2003). Neither the *mujahedin* nor the Taliban were able to overcome this problem and had to run the country with the help of a large clientelist network. Presently, the interim Afghan government is faced with the same problem, a precarious situation made more acute by the massive aid money flowing into Afghanistan. This aid money has strengthened the NGO sector (both the Afghan and international NGOs) at the expense of the government and allowed the NGOs to become a parallel structure to that of the government, a position bolstered by developing their own clientelist network. This, in turn, has increased the country's "fundamental problem, namely the lack of modern state institutions capable of implementing a monopoly of power and a unitary legal order that represent the basic preconditions for social modernisation and economic development" (ibid.: 537). This analysis is supported by the assertion that up until 2002, "the international humanitarian community [in Afghanistan] ... functioned as a shadow government by providing basic welfare and social services in a country where rival groups prepared for, or engaged in, warfare. Aid priorities were mostly determined by donor interests, agency mandates, NGO objectives and access to networks in the field" (Suhrke et al. 2002: p. 25). Hence, it is important not to strengthen civil society at the expense of the state which is the only institution "capable of implementing a monopoly on power and a unitary legal order that represent basic preconditions for social modernisation and economic development" (Wimmer and Schetter 2003: p. 537). If the above analyses are correct, it means that bilateral aid to NGOs should carefully avoid strengthening the NGO sector at the expense of state institutions. An important question in this review is therefore to what degree the Norwegian NGOs have complied with government regulations, channelled projects through the appropriate government channels and prioritised areas and sectors identified by the Afghan government and its ministries. These questions are discussed in section III.

Section II: Organisational profiles

Summary: This section presents an organisational profile of NCA and the NAC. The organisations differ in their size, funding and mandate, yet both have been involved in long-term delivery of broad-based aid interventions in rural Afghanistan since the late 1970s. NCA's long-term strategic planning is stringent and rigorous, but more emphasis on explicit policy formulation would be desirable. The NAC has struggled to fulfil reporting and (Norad's) "own funding" requirements, problems that are rooted in the organisational model.

Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC)

General

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) was established shortly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In 1983, the NAC opened its first project office in Peshawar (Pakistan) and from 1986, its first office in Ghazni City in the Ghazni Province of Afghanistan. The NAC is a registered NGO and politically independent membership organisation with members and local committees in Norway. As a solidarity organisation, the NAC also seeks to build understanding about Afghanistan in Norway and among its members (NAC 2004c: p. 7). The organisation's highest authority is the annual meeting (lands møtet), which elects representatives to the national advisory board (landsstyret) and the executive board (arbeidsutvalget, AU). The organisation's secretariat is in Oslo and staffed by the secretary general (full time) with a minimal support staff in charge of accounting (shared with Kabul office) and information activities (full time). Due to cost-cutting, the staff has been further reduced and currently the only remaining full-time Norwegian staff members are the secretary general in Oslo and the resident representative in the Kabul office.

Financial status

Until 2001, the NAC was funded by Norad/MFA on a year-by-year basis. Coming under the Norad framework agreement in 2003 changed the NAC's funding situation for the better. However, the framework agreement required the NAC to increase its own share of the funding ("egenandel") from around NOK 250,000 to around NOK 850,000. In 2003, the NAC was not able to raise the required amount and was exempted from this requirement by Norad (NAC 2004b). In 2003 the NAC entered a so-called Party to Cooperation Agreement ("rammeavtale") with Norad for the period 2003–07 (NAC 2003b). In 2004 the NAC experienced a shortfall in its budget due to a budget cut in the Norad framework agreement. The NAC lodged a complaint against this reduction in funding, citing consequences such as downsizing the organisation, implementing drastic cost cuts, laying off local staff and reducing the breadth of projects in Afghanistan (NAC 2004b) (see section III, BILATERAL AID).

In realisation that it will need broader funding for its projects, the NAC has initiated a new project proposal directed towards other donors, including one proposal to the European Union (EU) (NAC 2004b). Nonetheless, the NAC is still highly dependent on Norad/MFA funding and has problems in attracting other donors. This has caused the organisation to lose funding at a time when aid to Afghanistan has been increasing. As a result, the organisation was obliged to reduce its staff, in turn causing additional problems with complying with the more rigid standards for project management and reporting that applies to Norad framework agreements. This further invites the question whether NAC is capable of handling complex projects satisfactorily (see section III, ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRAINTS).

Reporting

The material supplied for the desk review was very limited and included an annual report, annual project reports, annual plan, funding proposals to MFA, as well as some miscellaneous correspondence with Norad/MFA on funding proposals (see Knudsen 2004a).¹ The documents covered the period 2002–04 and there was no material referring to the NAC projects before this date. This lack of information made it impossible to analyse project changes etc. for the period 2000–04 on the basis of written material alone. Below is therefore a summary of the projects and policies of the NAC for the period 2002–04. The quality of the supplied documents is adequate, but typically gives priority to project documentation over policy formulation. Overall, the NAC contributed too little written information to assess the organisation's goals, objectives and results for the period 2000–04. In Afghanistan the team was provided with a range of documents which, if they had been delivered in time, would have been fully sufficient for the phase I requirements. For the final report, it has been decided to consult these documents, despite the fact the NAC could not deliver them on time (see section III).²

Goals and objectives

In the material supplied by the NAC for the desk review, there was little information about the long-term goals and objectives of the organisation. This made it difficult to assess whether the political changes in Afghanistan since 2001–02 have led to a new strategy(-ies) on the part of the NAC. On a more general level, the NAC annual report (NAC 2004c) outlines the organisation's policy as solidarity with the Afghan people, impartiality, gender sensitivity, grassroots orientation, and taking into account local governing bodies (*shuras*) as well as the new national development plans of the transitional government of Afghanistan (TGA). The plan also highlights the importance of recruiting and training local staff. Apart from this, there is little information in the supplied material about the long-term development goals of the NAC (but see section III).

Portfolio

The NAC's project portfolio is predominantly located in rural hardship areas and presently covers seven provinces to the east and north. Current projects include water and sanitation (Badakshan), irrigation (Badakshan), school construction and rehabilitation (Ghazni), health, in particular clinics (Ghazni, Nuristan), and road rehabilitation (Badakshan) (NAC 2003b). In general the projects are small scale and community-based and were implemented following a local needs assessment and commitment from the concerned communities. For a small organisation, the willingness to work in remote hardship areas is commendable.

The NAC's *education sector* projects include Food-for-Education (FFE) to increase school enrolment. The programme distributes wheat and cooking oil to male and female students who complete at least 22 days a month at school. The NAC also supports the schools with stationery, learning materials and books as well as imparting training to teachers in mobile units (Ghazni and Badakshan) (NAC 2004c: p. 11).

The NAC's *construction projects* include buildings (schools and clinics), roads, bridges and retaining walls. Community ownership of completed projects is stressed and the communities are asked to contribute 30 per cent of the project costs, mostly by providing free labour and sand/gravel. The eastern provinces (Nuristan and Kunar) suffer from bad security and have

¹ The material arrived on 13 August 2004. Some additional material was delivered by e-mail on 1 September, hence too late to be included in the desk review (see Knudsen 2004a).

² This includes a number of project reports, annual reports (e.g., NAC 2001, 2002, 2003c), and policy and strategy documents as well as internal and external project reviews and evaluations. Because of time constraints, however, it has not been possible to consult these documents in any detail.

become a no-go zone for foreigners. For this reason, the NAC's construction projects in these provinces have fallen behind schedule.

The *environment sector* projects are afforestation oriented and use nurseries to rear and distribute tree seedlings (vegetable, tree, fruit, feed). The organisation also has attached a "widow-and-tree programme" where widows nurse seedlings against payment (110 widows). Moreover, there is a focus on raising environmental awareness (Badakshan).

The *health sector* projects are geared to combatting the very high infant and maternal mortality in Afghanistan. Once finished, the clinics are run by Afghan NGOs. The NAC build and operate different types of clinic, from comprehensive clinics able to undertake minor surgery to mother-and-child health clinics (MCH). The organisation also runs an expanded programme of immunisation (EPI) and emergency obstetrics care (EOC). The figures indicate that a high number of users depend on these health facilities. In addition to the above, the NAC runs an orphanage in Badakshan catering for 30 children between 3–17 years of age.

Because of poverty, Badakshan has become a centre of poppy cultivation. This not only influences the local subsistence economy but also inflates the local salary level. Because of the high prices earned in poppy cultivation, the NAC is unable to offer attractive salaries to unskilled labour which instead is inclined to work for higher wages in the lucrative opium (poppy) cultivation. This makes work-for-pay projects difficult to implement, causing them to be delayed or, in some cases, abandoned (NAC 2004a). In some cases, the deteriorating security situation has also influenced project implementation, causing construction projects to fall behind schedule (e.g., Zakury Clinic, Ghazni province).

Overall, the relevance of the NAC's project portfolio is quite high – the projects are all relevant to the current situation in Afghanistan. It is worth noting, however, that the NAC is first of all involved in relief and rehabilitation projects, and has not taken up new themes relevant to post-war Afghanistan such as peace-building and advocacy work. Whether there should be tighter priority regarding what to deliver and where to deliver is discussed in section III. This seems especially important considering that only a few of the projects have been evaluated by independent evaluation teams and that the remainder have only been subject to internal reviews. The projects' impact, effectiveness and efficiency are discussed elsewhere (see section III, PROJECTS). To summarise, the NAC's project portfolio is typical of smaller NGOs with an emphasis on health, education and construction and lesser amounts devoted to environmental rehabilitation and emergency relief. To what degree the projects have been anchored not only in local needs assessment but also in government plans and the new sector plans drafted by the transitional government is appraised in section III of this report.

Partners

The NAC implements projects through its own regional offices as well as local partners. The documents supplied for the phase I desk review gave only minimal information about who the partners are and what their partner status is. This is therefore discussed in section III (see PARTNERS). An overview of the main partners can be found in the Appendix 4.

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

General

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is a non-governmental and ecumenical organisation working in a number of countries with emergency relief, long-term development assistance,

and building attitudes and influencing decision-making. The organisation's headquarters are in Oslo and currently it has a staff of around 120 persons. NCA has been active in Afghanistan since 1979. During the 1980s the organisation worked mostly with Afghan refugees but from the mid-1980s began cross-border operations. In the early 1990s the organisation embarked on its current policy of implementing projects in Afghanistan through local Afghan NGOs. This strategy proved very successful and induced the organisation to continue its Afghan operations from its base in Peshawar (Pakistan). In 2002, the Afghan programme's headquarters were shifted from Peshawar to Kabul, although the organisation had maintained a subsidiary Kabul office since 1996. Currently, NCA has four expatriates based in Kabul with a fifth staff member being seconded to the interim Afghan government. The Kabul team is seconded by a team at NCA's foreign office ("utenlandsavdelingen") which provides policy input, accounting expertise as well as programme coordination. NCA also maintains a backup office in Peshawar which currently provides supplemental accounting support.

Financial status

Until 2000, NCA's funding was based on one-year grants from Norad/MFA, which at the time made long-term planning and development interventions difficult (NCA 1999b: p. 6). At the time, as much as 78 per cent of the funding for the region was based on short-term grants from the MFA. From 2001, NCA's Afghanistan programme came under the Norad frame agreement (see section III). NCA is a major recipient of Norad/MFA funding, yet has significant cofunding resources through the annual ACT appeals.³ The organisation has professional fund-raising expertise in Norway and has not reported any problems with fulfilling Norad's requirements for own funding ("egenandel") (see section III, BILATERAL AID).

Reporting

NCA has supplied a large collection of project documents for this review, including annual reports, annual plans, activity plans (VIPs), activity reports (VIRs), strategic plans, gap documents, evaluation reports and project assessments as well as a large number of project documents (PIDs). The material covers the period from 1999 to 2004 and gives a detailed overview of the activities undertaken during this period. The number of report types makes it a bit difficult to get a comprehensive and clear picture of the organisation's overall goals, objectives and results. Nonetheless, the quality of the supplied material was high and fully adequate for completing phase I of the review (Knudsen 2004a). However, the supplied documents contain little explicit information about the Afghan government, its development plans (NDF) and how NCA envisages relating to them. Instead, the documents focus on goals, objectives, priorities and shorthand project presentations. NCA has supplied a comprehensive range of documents for this review, but overall there is no single document that gives a comprehensive overview of the organisation's policy goals and the policy processes that inform these goals and objectives. Instead, most programme documents derive policy statements from a synopsis of the current state of affairs in Afghanistan. However, the programme documents do provide a clear rationale for the current NCA projects and programmes (see STRATEGIC PLANS and section III, POLICY).⁴

³ As a member of Action of Churches Together (ACT), NCA has taken part in two ACT appeals (2001, 2002) and implemented 75 projects with the help of 11 partner NGOs. The total budget for the ACT Appeals was ASAF-11: US\$ 10.5 million (42% of what was requested); ASAF-21: US\$ 2.5 million (35% of what was requested). The two ACT appeals were evaluated by an independent evaluation team (Strand, Hakimyar et al. 2003). Because the ACT appeals have not involved NORAD as a donor, the ACT projects have not been included in this review (but see NCA 2003d).

⁴ On 5 November 2004, NCA supplied a copy of the new "Afghanistan Country Programme Plan, 2005-09". This document has not been reviewed here due to time constraints.

Portfolio

NCA is an intermediary NGO with a large project portfolio spanning many different project types and policy interventions. In order to achieve this breadth of projects the NCA strategy has been to partner Afghan NGOs whose skills and goals match NCA's objectives. Currently NCA has approximately 12 partner NGOs, which carry out projects in a number of sectors (Appendix 4).⁵ In 2002, the project portfolio included HIV/AIDS, water and irrigation, overcoming violence/peace-building, health, food security (incl. micro-enterprises), conflict management and reconciliation, emergency preparedness, gender/human rights issues and the environment (NCA 2002b). The projects have a very wide geographical reach and at their fullest extent included 17 provinces in the south-eastern (e.g., Kandahar, Zabul, Lagman, Nangarhar, Kunar) and central regions (e.g., Logar, Kabul, Uruzgan, Ghazni, Wardak and Bamyan) (NCA 2002a: p. 3).

In 2003, NCA's Afghanistan programme and project portfolio was reviewed as part of an internal planning mission (Strand, Daudzai et al. 2003). The planning mission recommended that NCA should consider:

- reducing the number of partner NGOs, letting them specialise in different fields (integrated rural development, peace-building and education, advocacy work and civic education, health and emergency preparedness)
- focusing on integrated rural development in one province (Uruzgan province)
- strengthening the link with government agencies to improve planning and professional capacity
- phasing out HIV/AIDS treatment but maintaining a monitoring focus on this issue
- employing more Afghan nationals due to security concerns
- changing the current management structure to fit with the new operational plans
- conducting a feasibility study in Uruzgan

Overall, the relevance of NCA's project portfolio is high – the projects are all relevant to the current situation in Afghanistan. Whether there should be tighter priority regarding what to deliver and where is discussed in section III of this report.

Partners and partner strategies

NCA regards working through local partners as the most viable strategy for aiding long-term development in Afghanistan (NCA 2001: p. 2). NCA's stated goal is to reduce aid dependency among its partner NGOs and help them explore alternative sources of funding (NCA 2000a: p. 5). These are young organisations, with a weak mid-level management; some organisations are overstretched and have a high employee turnover due to new employment opportunities in international organisations. NCA is currently involved in an internal review process with the aim of providing the organisation with more systematic knowledge of its partners (NCA 2002b: p. 17). The process is expected to lead to a reduction of partners and a more integrated programme profile. Although this will reduce the number of partners as well as reduce the geographical coverage, NCA seeks to ensure a fair ethnic and political balance (NCA 2002b, pp. 12, 14). The programme of one of the partner NGOs, the Anti-Tuberculosis Association (ATA-AP), has been evaluated and the report concluded that the health results were above WHO requirements (Jadoon 2002).

In its relationships with its partners NCA highlights the organisation's comparative advantage and "added value" such as transparency and accountability, drawing on local human resources and NCA's long history of working in Afghanistan, which lends it credibility. NCA's specific

⁵ In addition to the sectoral projects mentioned above, the NAC has also been part of two ACT appeals (2001, 2002) for a number of relief and rehabilitation projects that were carried out by the NAC staff and its partners.

contributions to its NGO partners also include competence building among its Afghan partners as well as introducing participatory approaches to community development (expected to lead to the formation of a democratic civil society in the long run). The thematic priorities include HIV/AIDS, gender and violence against women. The target groups are local communities and groups, returning IDPs and refugees, demobilised fighters and war victims as well as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS victims.

Strategic plans

Until 2002, NCA developed strategic plans for the whole South Asian region (e.g., NCA 2000c, 2001), but following the regime change in 2001–02, NCA decided to develop a separate strategic plan for Afghanistan (NCA 2002a). NCA's country strategic plan for the period 2002–04 gives "a long term perspective and overall direction to NCA's operational annual plans in Afghanistan" as well as creating "an overall foundation for the organisational development of NCA in Afghanistan" (NCA 2002b: p. 4). Nonetheless, the plan spends little time and space on explicit policy formulation but more on the worrying development trends in post-Taliban Afghanistan: violence, drought, gender inequality and overall security risk (p. 5). The report highlights the competence and credibility of NCA and the holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to development among its partners (p. 6), in tandem with NCA's links to Norwegian centres of expertise, especially in the water sector. The plan stresses that NCA will relate more actively to government authorities, especially within the water sector, and seeks to influence government authorities. NCA also seeks to work more closely with INGOs where appropriate (NCA 2002b: p. 13). During this year, NCA initiated an expanded water programme, which involved better water management as well as water rehabilitation (urban and rural) and capacity building with the governmental Central Authority for Water Supply and Sanitation (CAWSS).

However, chief among the limitations to NCA's development potential in Afghanistan, the report lists the "new interim government's expressed scepticism towards the uncoordinated role of NGOs" (NCA 2002b: p. 6) and the limitations this may place on NGOs' "space" compared with the previous situation. A similar space reduction is caused by INGOs and the multilateral organisations taking up work with local NGOs, causing them to be overstretched and, possibly, reducing the operational scope of long-time NGO partners such as NCA. The same reduction in scope is caused by the mounting security risk in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Beyond what has been summarised above, the country strategic plan does not develop further policy goals in more detail or depth but devotes most space to programmes and priorities (pp. 7-18). The sectoral priorities also seem unchanged and include HIV/AIDS, water and irrigation, overcoming violence/peace-building, health (being phased out), food security (including micro-enterprises), conflict management and reconciliation, emergency preparedness, gender/human rights issues and the environment.

To summarise, in 2002 the post-Taliban scenario made NCA develop a separate strategic plan for Afghanistan. Yet, with the exception of the new water programme, NCA's strategic plan for 2002 does not deviate in major ways from those two years previously. There is relatively little explicit policy formulation at a time when this would seem both important and timely.

Summary of programme documents, 2000–04

In 2000, reduced funding led to a review of staff and administrative costs and the shifting of activities from Peshawar to the Kabul office, although the Peshawar office was still the "centre of gravity" for NCA's Afghanistan programme (NCA 1999a). Local contributions to partner programmes were on the increase. The programme goals were strengthening emergency preparedness and conflict management and reconciliation work, together with

some advocacy work to raise more money for Afghanistan in collaboration with the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC). The funding situation was based on one-year grants from Norad/MFA, something that made the long-term planning of development interventions difficult (NCA 1999b: p. 6). The project plans gives a comprehensive overview of the projects and projects planned for 2000 – the overall scope is very broad and includes a large number of activities.

In 2001, despite the attacks on Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban regime, most of the projects were finalised according to schedule (NCA 2000b: p. 3). Nonetheless, many of the workplan objectives did not materialise and for the last three months of the year efforts were directed towards implementing emergency assistance. An additional NOK 35 million for emergency assistance was released by the MFA and the international ACT Network. In order to undertake a large number of emergency relief and rehabilitation projects, a number of expatriates were hired on short-term contracts, something that strained managerial capabilities and made it difficult to devote time to long-term development objectives. In some areas emergency preparedness was not implemented as planned and conflict management and reconciliation (in Wardak and Ghazni) was only partially implemented. The political priorities for the year 2001 were water, conflict prevention and HIV/AIDS.

In 2002, the main programme activities were still in relief and rehabilitation (NCA 2003a: p. 4), while some Norad-funded projects were more long-term and focussed on food security and health.⁶ The same year, NCA initiated an expanded a water programme which involved better water management as well as water rehabilitation (urban and rural) and capacity building with the governmental Central Authority for Water Supply and Sanitation (CAWSS). Moreover, NCA aimed to offer direct support to government agencies to strengthen their institutional capacity (managerial, technical etc.) as well as involvement in water rehabilitation programmes (NCA 2002a: p.5). NCA continued its advocacy work through ACBAR. There were no new geographical priorities (NCA 2003a: p. 8). Concerning organisational priorities, the main office and staff was relocated from Peshawar to Kabul during the summer of 2002.

For the period 2003–04, the programme documents highlight NCA's involvement in Afghanistan: its long presence in the country, good relations with the interim government, large network of partner organisations and their geographical coverage (17 provinces), the type of work it undertakes together with its partners (capacity building, rural development and water related issues), and finally NCA's access to Norwegian water expertise (NCA 2002a: p. 2). The thematic priorities include organisational development, water, food security and livelihood, education, overcoming violence (conflict management), emergency preparedness and response and HIV/AIDS (as part of health initiatives). However, NCA realised the need to ensure a more focussed and integrated approach than had been the case in the past (NCA 2002a: p. 2). More specifically, NCA (NCA 2002/03) plans to reduce its geographical coverage and give priority to water initiatives and interventions. A new initiative was planned in the Uruzgan province (following the Strand planning mission), with the phasing out of six projects as well as a reduction in funding by 50 per cent for another four. Advocacy (human rights, including women's rights) is suggested as a new priority area (although another document says advocacy is not a priority among the partner NGOs), together with community-based peace-building and empowerment (competence building, strengthening partner organisations, health).

⁶ This included projects such as water supply, nutrition and health, as well as food supply to destitute people (Bamyan and Balkh) and income-generating projects (i.e., quilt production) for 300 women in Kabul. Conflict Management and Reconciliation continued through CPAU (NCA 2003a: p. 8). There was hectic activity, with more than 100 new relief and rehabilitation projects being signed.

To *summarise*, the project documents for the period 2000–04 suggests that a “cut-off point” for NCA’s Afghanistan programme cannot be identified: there is no sharp break with its former policies during the project period. This not surprising, as programme changes take time, but still a clearer strategic vision of NCA’s new role in post-Taliban Afghanistan would have been expected (see section III, POLICIES).

Section III: Findings and recommendations

Summary: The first part of this section gives an overview of the Norad/MFA bilateral funding to the Norwegian NGOs during 2000–04 and of the rules and regulations that apply to the different funding sources (“chapters”), and discusses their financial incentives. The second part summarises project-level findings and recommendations based on a field assessment of selected projects in Afghanistan.

NGO funding: Incentives and implications

Bilateral aid

Afghanistan is currently a major recipient of Norwegian bilateral aid. Since 2003, the majority of Norwegian bilateral funding has been channelled through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The ARTF is a multi-donor mechanism administered by the World Bank (WB). Despite the consensus among donors on the need to improve donor coordination and harmonisation as well as on strengthening Afghan ownership, not all donors have embraced the ARTF as the multi-donor channel (MFA 2004: p. 128). Together with the UTSTEIN countries, Norway has been a major contributor to the fund. The ARTF mechanism is meant to cover recurrent costs/administrative expenses and fund development projects.⁷ In 2003, Norwegian bilateral aid to the ARTF was NOK 145.3 million, supporting the three Norwegian state-to-state priority sectors – public administration, education and livelihoods – in addition to recurrent costs.

Norwegian bilateral aid to the NGO sector in Afghanistan consists of three different funding mechanisms:

*Norad framework agreement (Chapter 160.70):*⁸ the funding is subject to administrative regulations and the goals of Norwegian development policy (MFA and Norad Online). The funding is allocated to Norwegian NGOs in the short and medium term and includes peace and reconciliation processes, human rights and democratisation as well as strengthening civil society. The support to the NGO sector is meant to supplement multilateral and bilateral development cooperation. Important goals are supporting Norwegian development policy priorities such as combating poverty and promoting human rights, peace and reconciliation as well as political pluralism and political participation for marginal groups (women, children, disabled). Of special importance, the funding should not weaken or compromise the authority of national authorities and should build local capacity. Specific requirements also apply to the NGO grant holders (“tilskuddsmottaker”), which, in addition to demonstrated professional and administrative competence, needs a clear strategy for their development work and to bring added value beyond the purely economic support to projects. The Norad framework agreement requires the grant holder to collect its own funding (“egenandel”) amounting to 10 per cent of the Norad contribution. In 2001, NCA came under the Norad framework agreement. From 2003, the NAC was also operating under a framework agreement.

Norad/MFA transitional assistance (Chapter 162): the transitional assistance funds are meant to close the “gap” between emergency relief and long-term aid, hence are colloquially

⁷ Grethe Löchen, UD, pers. comm. 11 November 2004.

⁸ Note that in this report the colloquial “Norad framework agreement” is used instead of the “Global allocation for civil society”. The latter covers global allocations to civil society actors (NGOs) and includes medium-term “framework agreements” and short-term contracts. The term “Chapter” refers to the official parlance used in the Norwegian parliamentary bill, see (MFA 2004)

referred to as “gap” funds (Norad/MFA 2004). The gap funding is meant to have a limited, medium-term duration and is mainly awarded to countries that do not receive funding through the regular development cooperation budget. Transitional assistance is a new funding mechanism introduced in 2002 (MFA 2004: p. 176). The gap funds are steered by Norwegian political priorities and the administration of the funds was for a short period vested with the MFA and then shifted to Norad. Following the reorganisation and new mandate for Norad in spring 2004, the responsibility for the gap funds was again vested with the MFA.⁹ The gap funds are allocated to the Norwegian NGOs following a funding proposal and a dialogue between MFA, the embassies and the NGOs. The funds are allocated on a year-by-year basis and must be spent within 12 months of being awarded. Since 2004, the 12-month time limit has been revoked and outstanding funds are transferable from one fiscal year to the next. The MFA’s decision on awarding gap funds is final and cannot be appealed.

In 2003 the total gap funding to Afghanistan was NOK 120 million, of which approximately NOK 90 million was allocated to the ARTF.¹⁰ This made Afghanistan the single biggest recipient of gap funding, receiving almost two-thirds of the funding made available to five countries in Africa (NOK 186.3 million). When the gap-funding mechanism was introduced, there were expectations among Norwegian NGOs that this would increase the funding available to them. This has not been the intention of the MFA, which has allocated about two-thirds of the gap funds to the ARTF as already shown above.

Humanitarian assistance (Chapter 163): the funds are used for emergency relief and are contracted to NGOs found to have the organisational capacity and expertise to implement emergency relief in complex emergency situations (Norad/MFA 2003). Projects under this chapter must conform to Norway’s strategy for humanitarian assistance as spelled out in the annual parliamentary bill (“Stortingsproposisjon”) and where appropriate, be coordinated with that of the UN (MFA 2004: p. 180ff). The grant holder’s track record, the feasibility of the proposed projects and their costs are evaluated. The humanitarian assistance funds are allocated following a detailed project proposal and an informal dialogue between the applying NGO and the MFA. The funds are allocated on a year-by-year basis and the allocated funds need to be spent within 12 months of being awarded. As a rule, the outstanding funds are not transferable from one fiscal year to the next. The MFA’s decision on the award of humanitarian assistance funds is final and cannot be appealed. In light of the democratic transition under way in Afghanistan, humanitarian assistance funding has been gradually reduced. In 2002, total humanitarian assistance funding amounted to NOK 220 million, in 2003 NOK 120 million and by 2004 was down to NOK 96 million.

Budget overview

In order to analyse the funding profiles of NCA and the NAC in more detail, the budgets for the period 2000–04 are presented below in graphical form (Figures 3 and 4). The budget overview shows the funding received and not the sum applied for (Appendix 4). In order to make the budgets comparable, it has been necessary to modify some budget details.¹¹ Note that this budget overview only shows the Norad/MFA funding (frame, gap, hum. ass.) and that the NGOs’ own contributions (“egenandel”) have been excluded as have their cofunding resources (see Appendix 4).

⁹ Einar Rystad, UD, pers.comm., 10 November 2004.

¹⁰ In 2003, the gap funding to Afghanistan included multi/bilateral aid (NOK 107.3 million), Norwegian NGOs (NOK 7.4 million) and other sources (NOK 5.3 million), see (MFA 2004: pp. 178-79).

¹¹ The NAC came under the Norad framework agreement in 2003, but in order to simplify the overview the funding for the years 2000-02 has still been listed as “Norad frame”. In 2000, NCA received NOK 740,000 from NORAD outside the frame agreement. This sum has been excluded from the overview (see Appendix 3). NCA came under the Norad framework agreement in 2001, but to simplify the overview, year 2000 has still been listed as “Norad frame”.

Figure 3: NCA funding, 2000-04

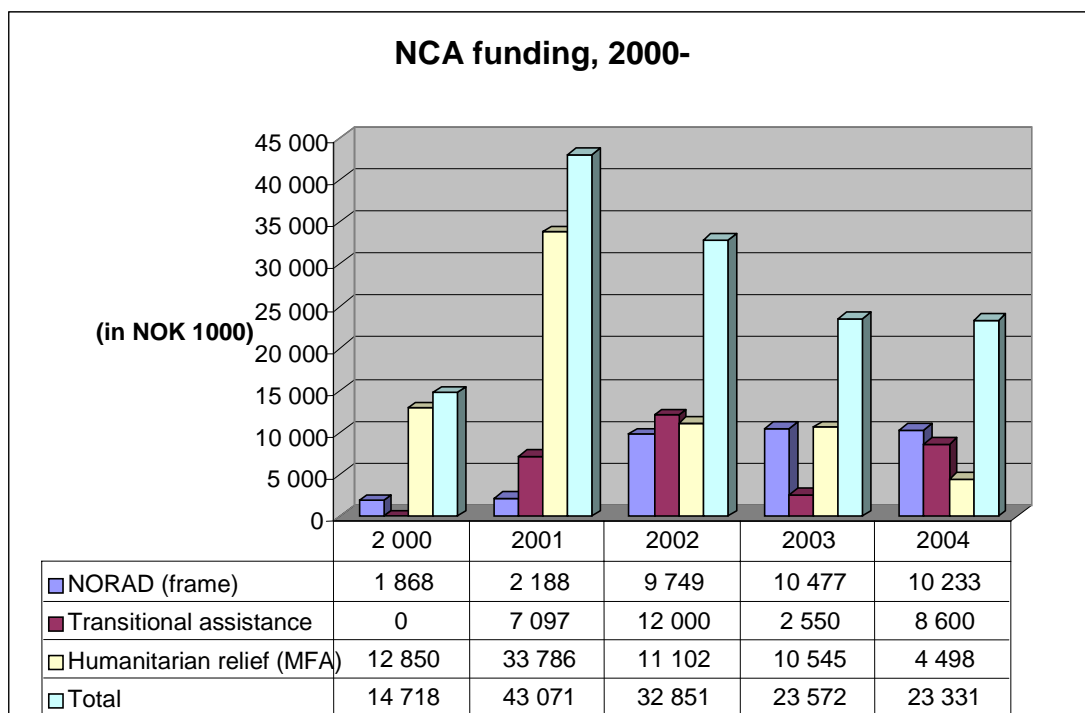
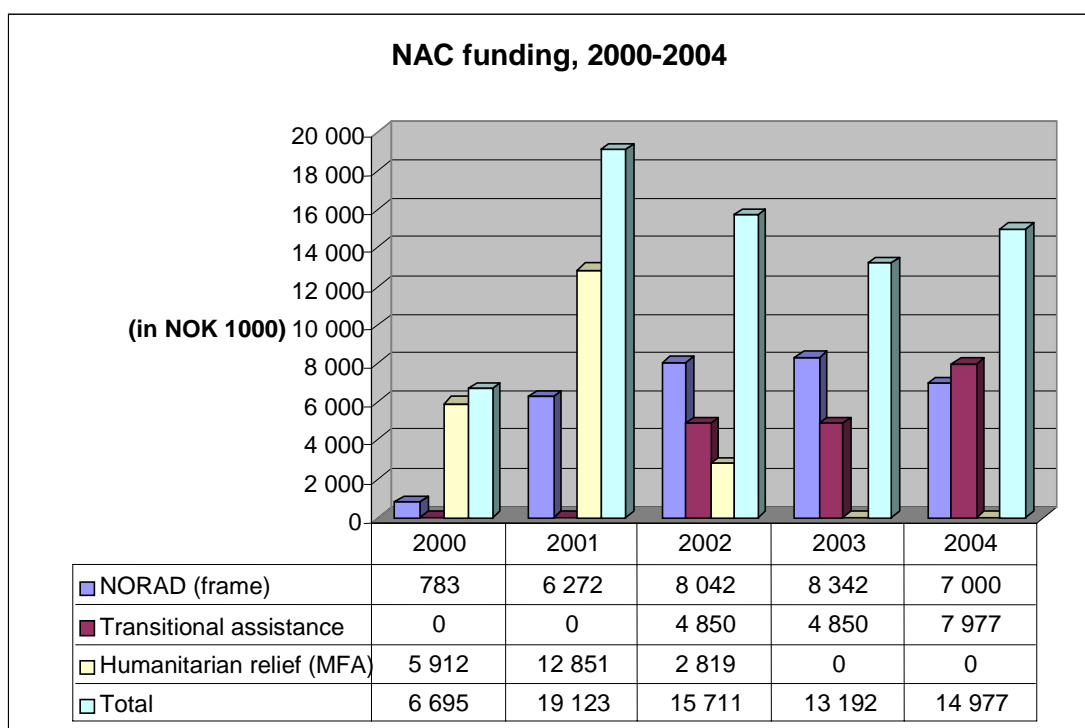


Figure 4: NAC funding, 2000-04



Figures 3 and 4 show that the *Norad framework* funding from 2002–04 has fluctuated from around NOK 7 (NAC) to NOK 10 million per year (NCA) and that the total Norad/MFA funding for both organisations peaked in 2001. This was due to the large amounts of funding for *humanitarian relief* that year. From 2002, humanitarian relief funding has been gradually

phased out in the case of the NAC, while NCA continued to receive substantial funds from this funding chapter during the period 2002–04. During the same period, the *transitional assistance* or gap funds have gradually increased in the case of the NAC, but fluctuated in the case of NCA. To summarise, the Norad/MFA funding profile for NCA and NAC are comparable, but throughout the period NCA's budget was bigger than that of the NAC. During the period 2001–04, both organisations have seen their total Norad/MFA funding decreasing, with gap funding replacing (but not fully substituting) the dwindling humanitarian relief funds.¹²

What have been the implications of this for the policies and strategies of the organisations? The first finding is that this tripartite funding regime provides the organisations with *mixed incentives*. First, the NGOs have to engage in three separate funding processes of which one is medium term (3-5 years), while the two others are short term (year-by-year). Thus, while the framework agreement requires that the organisations engage in medium-term planning, the gap and humanitarian relief funds do not. This is because of the requirements that apply to these funding chapters; as a rule, the funds are not transferable but need to be spent within 12 months after they have been awarded. This puts the organisations under a sudden heavy administrative workload because the short duration of the funding requires a rapid field deployment and subsequent completion of projects. For this reason, the organisations tend to use them for construction and rehabilitation projects. The reason for this is that construction and rehabilitation projects can be implemented and completed quickly (see below). This especially applies to the NAC, which lacks financial resources to initiate gap-financed projects before such funding has been secured from Norad/MFA. Both NCA and the NAC are highly dependent on Norad/MFA funding, but the NAC more so. The reason for this is that NCA has significant cofunding resources (through, for example, the ACT network) and professional fund-raising expertise in Norway (Appendix 4).¹³ The NAC, in comparison, has limited cofunding resources and less developed professional fund-raising skills (Appendix 3).¹⁴ However, it needs to be mentioned that the two organisations are so different in their size and organisation (see section II) that this difference should neither be surprising nor given too much weight.

In order to plan ahead, the NGOs need to know in advance approximately how much funding will be available to them during the next fiscal year. In other words, can the NGOs with some degree of certainty predict how much of the funds they have applied for will be granted by Norad/MFA? The two figures below give a simple overview of this relationship (Figures 5, 6). They show that in most years there is a close resemblance between the total funding applied for from Norad/MFA and the funding awarded ("result"), although for some years there is a considerable discrepancy.

For NCA, their biggest budget shortfall occurred in 2003 when the total sum awarded was less than half of that applied for. The main part of the shortfall (NOK 32.3 million, approx. 48%) was the funding for the planned water sector programme. The larger part of the water programme was not seen as being in line with Norwegian bilateral development policy in Afghanistan and was therefore not funded.¹⁵

¹² It was not the MFA's intention that shrinking allocations for humanitarian assistance should be compensated by increasing the gap funding. Grethe Löchen, UD, pers. comm., 11 November 2004.

¹³ The NCA budget overview shows that "own funding" from other donors amounts to 2000 (NOK 4.2 million), 2001 (NOK 10.1 million), 2002 (NOK 16.9 million) and 2003 (NOK 5.9 million), see Appendix 3.

¹⁴ The NAC budget overview shows that "own funding" from other donors amount to 2000 (NOK 1.8 million), 2001 (NOK 1.3 million), 2002 (0.9 million) and 2003 (NOK 0.9 million), see Appendix 3.

¹⁵ The decision-making process over the ill-fated water programme was complex and the details of this process cannot be entered into here. In short, NCA acknowledges weaknesses in the programme design but maintains that Norad/MFA had signalled that the proposal would be acceptable under the current gap-funding guidelines. Norad/MFA, on the other hand, maintains that NCA was informed early on that a project of this size and type would not be in line with Norwegian policies in Afghanistan.

Compared to NCA, the NAC experiences significant budget shortfalls more frequently. The largest shortfall occurred in 2002 (NOK 7.2 million) and was due to reductions in the frame (NOK 2.2 million) and gap funding (NOK 4.9 million). In 2004, the NAC experienced its second significant budget shortfall (NOK 6.7 million, approx. 30%) due to a shortfall in the funding provided under the framework agreement. One reason for this shortfall was Norad’s decision to penalise the NAC for its late reporting on the fiscal year 2003 (see section II).

To summarise, during the period 2000–04, the NAC twice experienced significant budget shortfalls (2002, 2004), while NCA experienced one (2003). The shortfalls are either due to reduced gap-funding allocations (NCA) or reduced gap *and* framework agreement allocations (NAC). The shortfalls are rooted in differences over programme priorities in Afghanistan (NCA) or administrative measures penalising overdue fiscal reports (NAC).

Recommendation 1: Norad/MFA are advised to undertake an internal review of the application procedures that apply to gap and framework proposals. The purpose of this review should be to ensure that applicants (NGOs) have a clear understanding of what type of programmes are fundable, the approximate amount that will be available to fund these programmes and the duties that they undertake by accepting funding. The goal should be to reduce ambiguity and ensure fiscal predictability.

Figure 5: NCA funding applied for and results, 2000-04

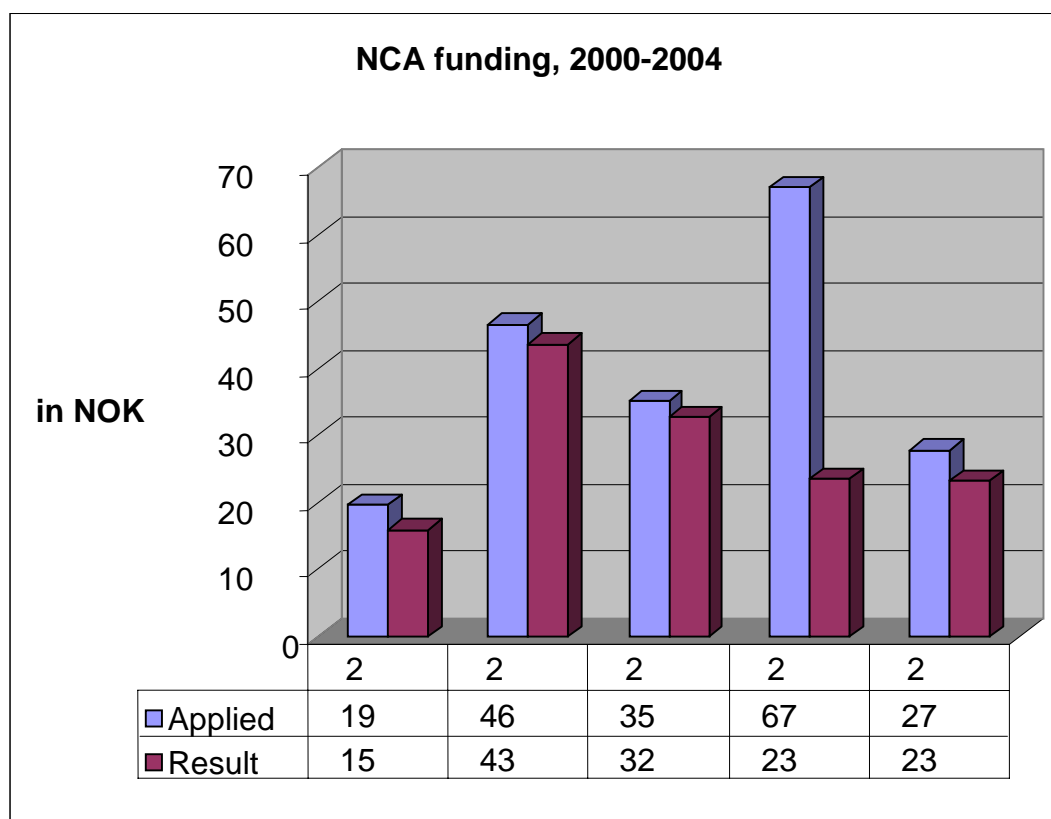
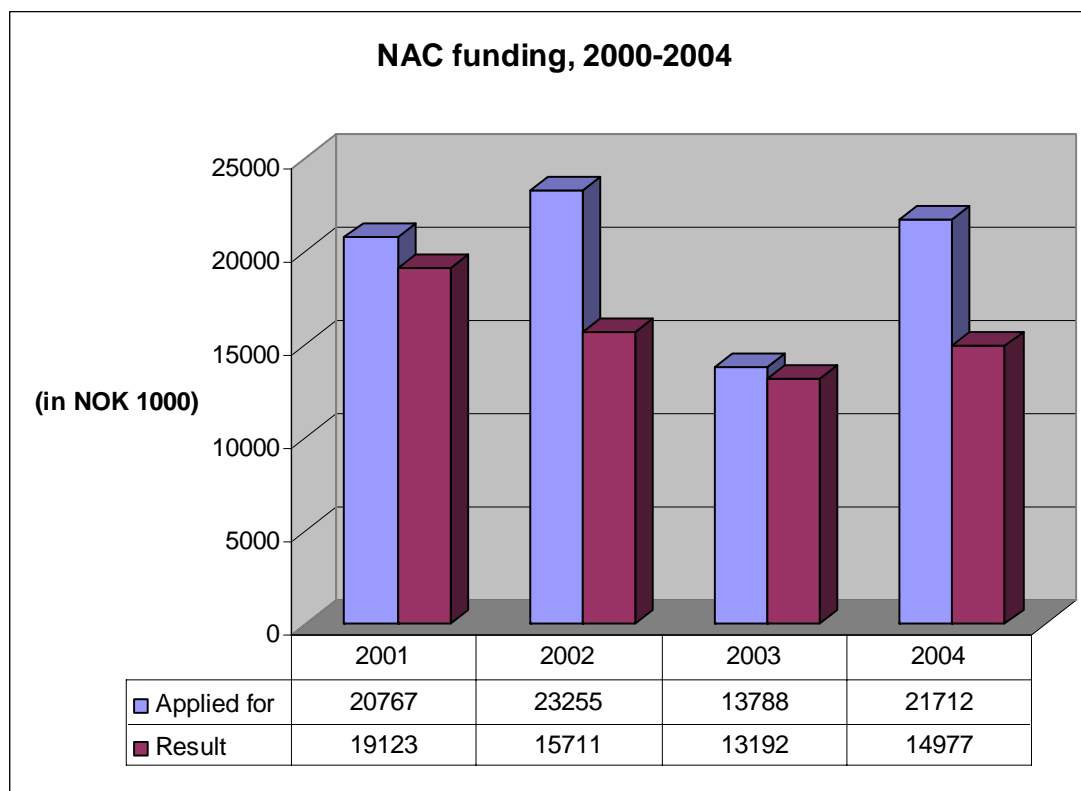


Figure 6: NAC funding applied for and results, 2000-04



Transitional and humanitarian assistance

During the period 2001–03, NCA received support for 75 projects from Norad/MFA in the categories listed below (Figure 7). During the same period, the NAC received support for 22 projects. Based on a brief document review, we find that NCA and the NAC have complied with the guidelines attached to the three different funding chapters. However, based on the limitations of this brief review, we cannot determine whether their activities were influenced or directed by budget guidelines against their own will, value systems or needs assessment of the situation in the areas in which they worked. Moreover, we find that the NAC/NCA's programmes fall broadly within the Norwegian priority sectors for aid to Afghanistan.

Figure 7: Norad/MFA project support to NCA and NAC, 2001-03

| Type (chapter) | Number of projects | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|
| | NCA | NAC |
| MFA: Humanitarian assistance (163, 164.70) | 10 | 5 |
| Norad/MFA: Transitional assistance (162) | 4 | 2 |
| Civil society (160.70) * | 61 | 15 |
| Total | 75 | 22 |

* Funding allocated to Norwegian civil society actors (NGOs)

In this review we have in particular looked at the first two funding chapters: transitional assistance (gap) and humanitarian assistance (Chap. 162, 163). An important question is how have the organisations used the gap funds at their disposal? Examining the project details for the gap funds, they have in the case of the NAC been used exclusively for reconstruction and rehabilitation projects and, in one instance, to cover the running costs of an orphanage (Appendix 4). For NCA, the funds have also been used primarily for construction and

rehabilitation but with smaller social components that include capacity building and skills training (see gap details, Appendix 4). The main reason for the predominance of construction and rehabilitation projects is, we believe, the short funding horizon (12 months) that applies to this funding chapter, which induces the NGOs (and the NAC especially) to favour short-term projects that can be implemented and completed quickly (see more below).

A second question is what *economic incentives* does the gap and humanitarian assistance funding represent for the NGOs? Taking 2002 as an example, we find that that the very large gap and humanitarian assistance funding to NCA was an incentive to work with traditional development assistance and emergency relief and a disincentive for beginning a process of organisational restructuring and policy change (Figure 3).¹⁶ A similar line of argument can be used for the NAC's 2004 budget, under which the organisation receives more gap funding than it receives under the framework agreement (Figure 4, see also Appendix 4). For the year in which the humanitarian assistance funding peaked (2001), the same argument can be made as for the gap funds: short-term objectives compete with the medium- and long-term ones in the Norad framework funding because of the very large amounts available in the former category (hum. ass.) as compared to the latter (frame). In turn, this could be one explanation why the organisations were not able to prioritise policy formulation and strategic planning in the transitional period 2001 and 2002 when humanitarian relief and gap funding, respectively, were at their peak.¹⁷

To *summarise*, the findings above suggest that if Norad/MFA seeks to promote long-term strategic planning in the Norwegian NGOs, it would make sense to rethink the current tripartite funding regime (frame, gap and hum. ass.). One solution would be to increase the Norad framework funding and reduce the gap funds accordingly. Another solution would be to make the gap-funding process more predictable so that the organisations would know at an early stage how much money would be available to them, or finally, to extend the one-year funding limit, thus allowing for more time to implement projects. This would also make sense if the goal were to promote more long-term social projects under the gap-funding chapter which at present are dominated by construction and rehabilitation projects (see details, Appendix 4). When it comes to the MFA's humanitarian assistance funding, this section has shown that this funding chapter is slowly being phased out in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, NCA still receives substantial amounts of funding under this chapter while the NAC does not (Appendix 4). If, as indicated in the ToR, a more long-term development orientation is now expected of the NGOs, it would be advisable to wind up this funding chapter and consider increasing the funding available under the framework agreement.

Recommendation 2: The Norwegian NGOs' strategies and policies in Afghanistan are strongly influenced by their Norad/MFA funding. If Norad seeks to promote policy and strategy change with a view towards long-term planning, the funding regime will have to reflect this. To this end, Norad/MFA should consider revising the current tripartite funding regime that applies to Norwegian NGOs in Afghanistan as indicated above. This is because the current funding regime puts a heavy administrative workload on the NGOs, promotes short-term projects and mixes short- and long-term objectives in a manner that makes the latter suffer. The Norad/MFA is advised to undertake a separate review of the current funding regime to test these assumptions more rigorously.

¹⁶ This may also explain why some NCA employees expressed some unease with the importance now suddenly placed on policy change (see, POLICY)

¹⁷ In 2001-02, for example, NCA in Afghanistan spent most of the year on administrating and implementing the large humanitarian assistance funding received from the MFA, Geir Valle, NCA, pers. comm., 30 August 2004.

Organisational constraints

As explained previously, the NAC is a Norwegian member-based organisation. The organisation currently has about 400 paying members organised in local branches, with the biggest local branch being located in Bergen. The organisation has a double mandate that includes solidarity with Afghanistan (including building knowledge about the country and its peoples in Norway) and running development programmes in Afghanistan.¹⁸ In recent years the organisation has been riven by factional conflict often involving one of the local branches against the Oslo secretariat or between individual members of the organisation. This together with an authoritarian management style in both Norway and Afghanistan has hurt the organisation, the control of the Afghanistan programmes and cooperation between Afghanistan and Norway. In particular it has been damaging to the working relations between the general secretary and the executive board. In addition to compromising the organisation's efficiency, a by-product of these organisational constraints was missed reporting, which led to problems both in monitoring programmes and in relation to donors demanding critical information such as progress reports and annual accounts. Since 2003, the organisation has tried to come to terms with these problems by instituting new reporting routines and changing its former management style.

Still, the problems outlined above raise the question of whether the NAC as a small Norwegian membership organisation has the necessary competence to run a NOK 15 million programme in Afghanistan with a large permanent and short-term project staff. The NAC's main problem is its organisational culture, which has made it unable to fulfil stricter requirements for timely reporting and has compromised its managerial effectiveness. Since early 2003, the organisation has started an internal review process that involves stricter reporting routines, better communication between the Afghanistan and Norway parts of the organisation, and better financial control. This has improved cooperation between the Norwegian and Afghanistan operations and increased its ability to raise its own funds as well as promoting greater visibility in the Norwegian media. It is also important to acknowledge that the NAC has come very far in "Afghanising" the organisation. At present there is only one Norwegian staff member in the Afghan organisation; the rest of the staff is Afghan. This also opens the question of a possible handover of the organisation as an independent Afghan NGO in the future. It is also important to note that the NAC's solidarity ideal means that compared to other foreign NGOs operating in Afghanistan, the premises, salaries, perks and accommodation are modest and the senior Afghan and Norwegian staff share accommodation in the organisation's rented residential compound.

NCA is a large organisation with an Afghanistan programme built up over many years. NCA's organisational model differs from that of the NAC; it is more hierarchical in its internal organisation and has Norwegians heading or supervising key management areas in Afghanistan (finance, project coordination etc.). NCA's home office in Oslo is also involved in policy formulation and strategic planning for the Afghanistan programme, both directly and through the organisation's global policy. NCA may be described as a professional NGO which differs from smaller NGOs surviving on shoestring budgets with a minimal Norwegian staff (such as the NAC). NCA's organisational model is one reason for its solid reporting routines and close links with key Afghan ministries. On the other hand, the organisational model may explain why policy changes take longer to plan and implement, because country policies are vetted by the head office in Norway. NCA's strong and diversified financial base is, however, one reason why it can chart a more independent course vis-à-vis the Norwegian

¹⁸ The local branches nominate three members to the annual meeting ("årsmøtet"). The meeting elects representatives to the national advisory board ("landsstyret"), which from among its members appoints the representatives on the executive committee ("arbeidsutvalget). The chairman and vice-chairman of the executive committee (both unsalaried positions) together with the general secretary constitute the NAC's leadership troika.

donors and develop programmes that fit with the organisation's own goals. As a large NGO involved in a number of developing countries, NCA is also an important contributor to the public development discourse in Norway and therefore in a position to influence the priorities of funding agencies.

Recommendation 3: The NAC is in the process of restructuring the organisation with the aim of improving managerial systems and reporting routines. The organisation is advised to implement better reporting and fund-raising routines and develop a clear fund-raising strategy, enabling the organisation to meet Norad's requirements for "own funding" ("egenandel"). NCA has built up a large professional organisation in Afghanistan with Norwegians in key management positions. Nonetheless, NCA should develop a strategy for preparing male and female Afghan staff to fill managerial positions as they become vacant. NCA is further advised to clarify the role of "country policies" in relation to "global policies" and to what degree the former should be informed by the latter.

Project-level recommendations

Shuras

With the practical and symbolic importance attached to local ownership of projects, it is no surprise that the local consensual assemblies, commonly referred to as a *shura* (pl. *shuras*), have become important and an integral part of what is often referred to as community-based development. In recent years the *shuras* have gradually been integrated into the Afghan bureaucratic structure as a local level decision making body (Harpviken et al. 2002). Nonetheless, the *shuras* are first of all responding to local needs and are often ignorant of national and district plans. With the increasing importance of district and provincial level planning and the formation of Provincial Development Councils (PDCs) and Community Development Councils (CDCs), the role of *shuras* vis-à-vis the new PDC/CDS-type councils will become important, as will their respective linkages to local and provincial development plans.

The Norwegian NGOs relate to *shuras* first of all in the project vetting process: is this project or intervention appropriate here and does it fulfil local needs? The simplest and most effective way to answer this question is to seek the advice of the local *shura*. In those cases where *shuras* do not exist, new *shuras* can be formed although this seems to be the exception.¹⁹ This ties in with the important question of whether NGOs should not only work with *shuras* but also engage in some form of competence building, aimed at enabling the *shuras* to shoulder new responsibilities effectively. Questions have also been raised about the representativeness of the *shuras* and the fact that women are barred from becoming members.²⁰ Still, there is the question of whether the organisations should try to influence the composition of the *shuras*. The communities they work in and the local norms people live by are usually very complicated. They represent a delicate balance formed by a combination of facts such as local tradition, some foreign influence, in many cases war and upheaval and displacement and return.

At the outset, one could question whether *shuras* and NGOs form a marriage of convenience where the NGOs cannot implement projects without some local approval and consensus and

¹⁹ "In some cases *shuras* are formed where both the members and its leader are elected through election procedures and subsequently approved by the local government authority. In many cases *shuras* are also instrumental in matters of local security to NGO property, resolution of problems in the projects communities, mobilizing & providing community participation and materials etc." (NAC 2004f).

²⁰ Currently, a number of new *shuras* are being established by NGOs, such as women's *shuras*, conflict resolution *shuras*, peace *shuras* etc. It remains to be seen whether the effectiveness of these new assemblies is compromised by their non-traditional character.

the *shuras*, on their part, clearly approve of the formal gesture of honour, respect and significance that the NGOs bestow on them. There is nonetheless a risk that NGOs may only pay lip service to the importance of *shuras*, using them essentially as a “project clearing house”. There is also the risk that a NGO is “hijacked” by influential *shura* members with vested interests in promoting specific interventions in selected areas or sites where they stand to benefit. One way to guard against such an outcome is to carry out a thorough needs assessment. The scope and duration of the needs assessment should be tailored to the planned intervention and in the least ensure that vested interests have not been unduly influencing the project design.

During the field surveys in Bamyan and Badakshan, the team met with local and provincial *shuras* as well as more informal gatherings of young and old villagers that would not qualify as a *shura* but simply as an informal group. The provincial *shuras* included a mixture of elder dignitaries, village representatives and men holding formal government positions in various departments as well as representatives of the local business community. Their formal status was underlined by wearing a full-length robe marking their seniority and official status.²¹ The local *shuras* were composed of older villagers aided by younger and literate ones, often a young schoolteacher speaking on behalf of the *shura*. The informal gatherings had none of the above characteristics and were drawn from a group of villagers gathered at the field site with no apparent leaders or spokesmen.

In general, it was not possible for the team to get a clear understanding of whether the *shuras* were a permanent fixture or had been assembled for the occasion. It was also not possible to ascertain exactly what role the *shuras* had played in the project planning process.²² What was clear was that the *shura* spokespersons were unanimous in their praise of the work carried out and would like it to be continued and expanded. Whether this should be taken at face value or considered a mode of formal oratory appropriate for such occasions remains a moot point. What was clear was that the informal groups we met (mostly in Bamyan, but also in Badakshan) neither offered similar praise of the projects nor presented the team with any gifts. However, when asked about a project(-s) they were unanimous that it had been selected by the community, was useful and served its purpose. This difference points to another important issue, namely the role of community ownership. Clearly, a functioning *shura* presents an advantage to an NGO because it is simpler to vest responsibilities (for maintenance and follow-up) with a *shura* than with a community or informal group. Moreover, the presence of *shuras*, signals a greater potential for community ownership than do informal groups whose membership is neither fixed nor formally acknowledged as representing the community. Finally, the more visible presence of *shuras* (in Badakshan compared to Bamyan) probably reflects not only the NAC’s deeper integration with the local society but also with the local formal and informal power structures. Please keep in mind, however, that this need not apply to other provinces where the NAC and NCA work and could be a result of the methodological constraints that apply to this review (see Appendix 3, METHODOLOGY). Moreover, NCA has worked more on capacity building with *shuras* than the field visit to Bamyan may have indicated.

In our debriefing discussions with the NAC and NCA, some argued that the role of *shuras* was principally to get some formal project approval and that too much emphasis on their developmental and managerial role was beside the point. The *shuras* were essentially a simple yet proven consultative body which provided swift local approval for projects that were sound and needed locally. Moreover, it was argued, the *shuras* in many cases would suggest projects that were not needed or should not be prioritised. It was therefore the NGO’s responsibility to

²¹ It is perhaps no coincidence that the review team was given gifts containing similar robes, thus bestowing a comparable formal status on us.

²² As the team understood it, the *shuras* can no longer approach a NGO directly and ask for help to carry out a project. Instead, the *shura* needs to forward this request through the local administration. If the request is approved, it will be forwarded to NGOs with a request to appraise it.

ensure that vital programmes, such as for example immunisation, were selected for implementation regardless of whether this was a community priority or not. These examples show that working through *shuras* is not a development panacea and that capacity building of and with *shuras* is important (see CAPACITY BUILDING).

Recommendation 4: Local consensual bodies (*shuras*) remain the most important institution for cooperation between the NGOs and communities, yet the relationship is often a tenuous one. NCA and the NAC are advised to strengthen their cooperation with local *shuras*, engage in their competence building and institute operational guidelines which clarify the role and responsibilities of *shuras* vis-à-vis NGOs and vice versa. Since *shuras* are now an integrated part of the local (district and provincial level) administration, it would be natural to link this with an overall strategy for strengthening local-level management capacity. To accomplish this, the NGOs need to stay informed about the CG process and the formation of PDCs and provincial development plans.

Policies

As mentioned in section II, neither NCA nor the NAC instituted major policy changes between 2001 and 2003. This is explained by the post-war context in Afghanistan, in which a new government, bureaucratic structure, funding mechanisms and national development plans were only gradually introduced. The two organisations did make minor policy changes but these were often implicit and without an historical baseline (“institutional memory”). For this reason, their policy statements tended to be scattered in different documents, meaning that there was no single document presenting a coherent strategic vision of the organisations’ role in post-war Afghanistan.

NCA made it quite clear that they did not feel obliged to make major changes to their programme profile during 2000–04. Yet, there were a string of significant programme changes that included the launching of the water supply and sanitation programme in mid-2002 (NCA 2003b); building capacity in four ministries (MMRD, MIWRE, MoHE, CAWSS) to launch this programme; increased cooperation with the new Afghan government; a planning mission in 2003 to chart a new course for the organisation; and proposing a new budget in 2004 to support the changes (NCA 2004b). At present, NCA is operating within the five-year plan covering the period 1999–2004. The organisation expects to implement changes to its Afghanistan programme when the next five-year plan takes effect in 2005. In general, NCA seeks to attack the development problems in Afghanistan on a broad front. This is in line with the organisation’s tradition of avoiding excessive specialisation.²³ As an example, the organisation has scaled back its original plans for a partner (NGO) review, originally intended to reduce the number of partners and thereby also to target fewer provinces. Additionally, some of the other recommendations spelled out in the internal planning mission during spring 2003 (Strand, Daudzai et al. 2003) have also not been implemented because the current management does not believe they are in the best interest of the organisation (One of the recommendations that was implemented was taking up work in the conflict-ridden Uruzgan province, see PROJECTS).

It has already been mentioned that for an organisation of NCA’s size and funding, a greater emphasis on explicit policy formulation would have been desirable. Policy formulations tend to be scattered around in different report formats and there is no historical baseline. NCA lacks a single document dealing specifically with policy goals and the specific role the organisation should have in Afghanistan. While this might have been acceptable (and even

²³ One of NCA’s expatriate staff members objected to the review team’s repeated questions about “change” and “new policies”, arguing that this missed the mark: there was neither a wish nor a perceived need for NCA to undertake major programme changes, nor had the fluid situation in Afghanistan during 2000–04 made this a priority.

desirable) during the war and the Taliban era, it is less so now. The new Afghan context is complex, includes many state and non-state actors and there is a certain opportunism in the “aid bazaar” evidenced by the close to 3,000 NGOs now registered with the Afghan authorities. In the present context, more emphasis needs to be placed on policy formulation and long-term strategic planning, pinpointing exactly what and where NCA wants to contribute. This process could also provide the management with a tool for streamlining the organisation and tailoring it to present needs.

Like NCA, the NAC has also been driven by a wish to contribute to the long-term development of a democratic Afghanistan on a broad front, with an additional emphasis on solidarity with the Afghan people. This has meant that the NAC until recently also did not prioritise explicit policy formulation beyond the broader goals of aiding Afghanistan’s reconstruction (see ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRAINTS). In mid-2003, the NAC initiated an internal policy review process leading to one policy paper and strategy paper (NAC 2004d), as well as a strategic plan for the period 2004–06 (NAC 2004e). Both documents are of a high quality and, although not formally approved yet, are in the process of being implemented. The documents underline the multiple challenges facing the organisation and the need to strengthen fundraising in Norway and actively seek out new donors in Afghanistan within the three strategic programme sectors; health, education and the environment. These documents provide a much needed strategic vision for the NAC’s work in Afghanistan and underline that the current leadership in the NAC has been able to implement changes in its managerial practice. Further underlining this change, the NAC has during the past year also completed new staff manuals and operational guidelines.

Recommendation 5: During period 2001–04 neither NCA nor the NAC instituted major policy changes (although new projects emerged). Since 2003 and the presence of a functional transitional government, the organisations have begun to undertake programme changes anchored in interim policy documents. The organisations are advised to undertake a major internal policy review with the aim of producing comprehensive policy documents and strategic plans covering the next three to five year period.

Partners

This section mainly deals with the NAC’s and NCA’s partner policies and is not a partner review as such. As mentioned earlier, the team met with most of NCA’s and the NAC’s partners (see Appendixes 1, 3). To these meetings some of the NGO partners had brought documented information in the form of annual reports or project summaries, but the majority brought no such information to the meeting, meaning that more time was needed to establish their project profile and what work they undertook with the Norwegian NGOs.

For NCA, the current partner strategy has a number of organisational and practical advantages. It frees the organisation from implementing programmes and instead leaves this to the partners. Secondly, the organisation does not need to have a large permanent staff, but can instead utilise the staff of the NGO partners. In the field, this model also provides the organisation with many advantages, for example by being able to work in areas where security concerns prevent Norwegian staff members from visiting the area. Over the years, NCA has systematically built the capacity of the organisations to the degree that all of them are now able to attract funding in their own right as Afghan NGOs. In fact, NCA is now only a minor donor for many of its NGO partners. Because of the many advantages this model provides, it is perhaps understandable that NCA has been reluctant to reduce the number of partners as envisaged in the proposed NGO review, which in reality has now been put on hold. The reason is that for both NCA and the NGO partners the advantage of continued cooperation outweighs any disadvantages. The NGO partners are unwilling to sever the link with NCA which provides them funds, staff training and strategically important information about new funding priorities in both Norway and Afghanistan.

In the field, the team was only able to observe the work of one of NCA's NGO partners, namely the Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee (CAWC) in the Bamyán province. In Kabul, the team also visited an ambulating malnourishment project run by the NPO/RRAA and a female shelter project run by the AWSDC (see PROJECTS). The details of NGO funding during the period 2000–04 were requested but not obtained from NCA; the team's impression was that the level of funding allocated to the different NGOs was relatively unchanged. While NCA has postponed decisions regarding its partner profile as part of its partner review, the organisation could have increased its budget allocations to the "soft sector projects" in its portfolio to indicate that this was now given higher priority. The fact that this was not done was in part explained by the fact that the organisation wants to continue its broad approach to development needs, a strategy that NCA feels is part and parcel of the organisation's *raison d'être*. There is, as one NCA expatriate staff member expressed it, "no organisational tradition for working in a narrowly defined area of specialisation".

The NAC implements projects through its own regional offices as well as local partners. In addition the NAC works with local and provincial *shuras* and provincial and central authorities (see SHURAS). Thus, the NAC has, unlike NCA, attempted to combine building in-house project implementing expertise with a NGO partner base. The partners are a mixture of small and medium-sized Afghan NGOs, which also includes provincial government departments, in particular the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). Because the NGO partners are not all of the same type, it follows that their relationships with the NAC are also different. The governmental departments are first of all monitoring the health and education programmes, while the rest of the Afghan NGOs are subcontracted to implement projects that involve service delivery and training. In general, the NGO partners expressed satisfaction with their cooperation with the NAC. In the field, the team was not able to meet with partner NGOs, except for a local representative of the Ministry of Education (Faizabad, Badakshan).²⁴ This is a reflection of the NAC's greater reliance on its own staff for project implementation, especially in the engineering and construction sector. This may also be one reason for the NAC's roots in local society in Badakshan and the organisation's status as a respected and visible development actor (see SHURAS).

Recommendation 6: The NAC and NCA should undertake a comprehensive partner review. The partner review should be carried out as part of the organisations' internal policy review with the aim of developing more focussed programmes with fewer partners. The selection of partners needs to reflect the goals and strategies in the concurrent policy review.

Capacity building

Because Afghanistan has a critical lack of skilled and educated people, capacity building is very important. Both the NGOs under review have engaged in capacity building but to varying degrees. Of the two organisations, only NCA has attempted to build capacity at the ministry level. It is commonly acknowledged that most of the Afghan ministries suffer from lack of expertise and rampant corruption. Moreover, competent staff are often lured away to international NGOs paying much higher salaries. Thus, both building capacity and keeping the capacity in the organisation is a currently a major challenge. In this context, NCA's strategic focus on the water sector led them to promote planning capacity in the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), one of several Afghan ministries in charge of water management. In order to build capacity at the MRRD, NCA seconded a Norwegian expert, Dr Svein Stoveland, as a consultant to the ministry. One could question whether NCA has the capability to build planning capacity in this field in a large department, a concern also

²⁴ The team met with the local WFP staff in Faizabad, but they cannot be considered partners in the sense used here.

raised by Norad (Norad 2002). In addition, Stoveland's role in the department is ambiguous since he has been given executive powers after being promoted to acting director in the department.²⁵

A more general problem with building capacity at the *ministry level* is that although the impact can be significant, due to funding constraints it will be a temporary rather than permanent improvement. At the provincial level, the problem of capacity building in the provincial government institutions becomes logistically very difficult, hence most of the capacity building becomes informal and unsystematic. Another important area for capacity building is the local communities or more specifically in the local *shuras*. In general, we found that capacity building in *shuras* was weak or non-existent (see SHURAS).

Concerning in-house training among their own *staff*, both NCA and the NAC have systematically built capacity among their staff through training sessions, internal staff promotions etc. In 2003, staff reductions and financial constraints forced the NAC to scale down in-house training, but this has now been given high priority.²⁶ Capacity building among partners is most strongly developed in NCA partner NGOs, where there has been a long-term and incremental process of raising staff capacities, including training and education abroad. In the meetings with the NGO *partners*, the importance of NCA's capacity building in the organisations was consistently highlighted. NCA has also invested strongly in building capacity among its own Afghan staff. It is, hence, no coincidence that in the upper echelons of the Afghan interim government we find former NCA employees and those of its NGO partners.²⁷ In some cases, this has given NCA a much closer personal link to some ministries than would otherwise be possible. Compared to NCA, the NAC has not been able to provide the same level of capacity building among its partners. This is also reflected in their comparatively lower competence level. Nonetheless, the NAC has also trained partner staff and funded training programmes aimed at enhancing their management capacity and project implementation skills. There is, hence, significant capacity building within partner NGOs, especially of NCA but also of the NAC.

Recommendation 7: The Norwegian NGOs should step up local competence building with the aim of improving the overall competence of local *shuras* and the local administration they are a part of. Moreover, competence building should be streamlined so that all the key staff (in the organisation and among NGO partners) are offered a standardised training package based on a common curriculum.

Projects - general

As explained in the second part of this report (section II), the NAC and NCA undertake a large number projects either alone (the NAC) or through NGO partners (NCA). In order to appraise the impact of these projects it would have been desirable to visit several provinces where they work as well as cover a wide spectrum of project types. As already explained, this approach is not feasible due to current security concerns in a number of provinces as well as to the time constraints applying to this review. This means that the team could not base its selection of field sites on their relevance to the review, but had to select them according to their relative safety and proximity to Kabul (see Appendix 3, METHODOLOGY). Because of this, it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions on the basis of a small and possibly biased

²⁵ The team questioned whether the secondment of Stoveland could become a liability for NCA and lead to charges against NCA of a conflict of interest. Both the NCA management and Stoveland himself felt that this was unlikely and that his position had no formal ties to NCA, although the organisation did fund his position at the ministry.

²⁶ Recently, the NAC has decided to prioritise staff training and competence building among its own staff due to staff reductions and the many new demands on the remaining staff.

²⁷ As an example Haneef Atmar, Minister for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), is a former NCA employee.

sample of project activities. Nonetheless, the field visits provided a general insight into the field activities and gave a clearer picture of the constraints and opportunities facing the NGOs under review.

The Norwegian NGOs' project portfolios fall broadly within three different categories: health, education and construction. For the NAC, there is a need to add a fourth one, namely environmental rehabilitation and environmental awareness (see NAC 2003a). For NCA, likewise, additional project categories include water and sanitation, peace-building, livelihoods and emergency assistance. The projects selected for the field review were in large part construction and engineering projects such as emergency shelters for IDPs and returnees, roads, bridges, culverts, irrigation channels, water reservoirs, water points and water intakes as well as latrines and, in one instance, a public bathroom. In addition, we visited literacy training programmes, an orphanage and tree nurseries and gardens. This selection shows a general trait, namely the preponderance of construction activities in the NGOs' portfolio, at least in the provinces visited (see CONSTRUCTION SECTOR). One reason for this, we believe, is not only the undisputed need for improving the local infrastructure and constructing new school and health facilities, but also that engineering and construction projects tend to be favoured by local communities, are similarly favoured by local governmental agencies, fit well with the considerable construction expertise among the NGO staff, are favoured by the current gap funding, provide the NGOs with visible proof of the project and, finally, satisfy the donor's concern that funding did have a local impact. Soft sector projects, on the other hand (such as literacy programmes), do not have comparable strategic advantages, which we feel is one reason why they only constitute a minor part of the NGOs' portfolio.

Overall, the projects were found to have adequate technical quality. In some isolated cases, the finished result was less proficient and durable than would be desirable. In some instances the implementing NGO partner experienced persistent technical problems and could not complete projects in time due to lack of expertise. While it is acceptable that an NGO "learns by doing", it is problematic that projects are implemented which the NGO lacks the necessary technical proficiency and skills to undertake. On a positive note, the NGO in question had in the end put great effort into completing the project despite incurring a financial loss.

In some instances, the team questioned why a site was selected for a particular project or intervention. There was hence in some instances a feeling that the selection owed more to the competence of the implementing NGO partner than the needs of the community. Our group and individual discussions with local villagers were, however, not able to confirm this view, pointing to the problem that villagers as project "beneficiaries" will only in rare cases express criticism or reservations against a NGO and its partners (see SHURAS). One reason for this is that the government is weak or non-existent, and the NGOs are therefore the local communities' only hope of help. They are therefore unwilling to voice criticism of a NGO that has come forward to help them, regardless whether the project or intervention proved less successful than initially hoped for or was really needed.

The projects reviewed in the field were carried out in provinces with a mixed ethnic composition, commonly with the ethnic and religious majority group dominating the city centre and the minorities living in more remote and ecologically marginal parts of the province. We found that although the biggest part of the project activities targeted the majority population, ethnic minorities were not neglected. This, however, leaves open the question of whether the Norwegian NGOs should specifically target minority populations who often are poorer and more destitute than the majority ethnic groups, who tend to be over-represented in the local administration, and hence are more likely to benefit from government services.

Recommendation 8: The Norwegian NGOs are advised to streamline the project planning process to ensure that appropriate projects and technology are chosen. In particular they

should guard against partner NGOs implementing projects for which they lack the necessary expertise. When the security situation allows it, a more comprehensive project evaluation should be carried out to evaluate the local impact of projects in more detail, including their effectiveness and efficiency.

Construction sector

NCA and NAC are both involved in construction work of various kinds. The NAC in particular has considerable in-house engineering expertise and a large staff working on construction activities. Most construction activities involve a local contribution of labour or in-kind amounting to about 25 to 30 per cent of the projected costs. In many cases, food-for-labour is used as a cofunding mechanism and the flour and cooking oil are obtained for free from the local World Food Programme (WFP) office. In this way, more roads, for example, are built for the same price.

An important question, and one that has been raised also by some Afghan ministers, is to what degree the NGO sector should engage in engineering and construction activities. Their argument is that the NGO sector should by and large vacate the construction sector and leave this to the Afghan private sector instead. Countering this argument, the NGOs have argued that they are working in remote areas where private enterprises are not willing to work due to the security risks involved and the slim profit margins. Moreover, the NGOs argue that subletting construction contracts to the private sector would increase costs and hence be less cost-efficient. There is certainly truth to these arguments, especially when considering health and education sector projects, which in general will not be economically profitable. Nonetheless, the review team saw one example where a Kabul-based construction company was building a three-storey shopping mall paid for by local money in an area where the NAC was building schools, bridges and irrigation channels. This example shows that the private sector, under certain conditions, does undertake contract engineering work in remote areas.²⁸

Another factor demonstrating that the private sector sees business opportunities in the development arena is the fact that a number of the registered Afghan NGOs are in fact pure private enterprises. The reason they undertake registration is to be eligible for tender bids offered to the NGO sector. A growing problem in Afghanistan is the subletting of engineering contracts originally contracted to an Afghan NGO for an inflated rate by an international NGO.²⁹ Instead of undertaking the work, the NGO sublets the construction work to another NGO for a much lower price. This process can be repeated, meaning that in the end the school, clinic or road is built at much lower standards and real costs than originally budgeted and with the majority of the profit accruing to the original contract holder. Although this malpractice is well known to the INGOs, it has been difficult to come to terms with it.

As mentioned in section I, poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has rebounded since the fall of the Taliban. A major goal is to find ways to reduce the farmers' dependence on opium cultivation through either crop substitution or other incentive-based mechanisms that will spur farmers to abandon opium cultivation willingly. A special problem for NGOs working in the construction sector is the role of irrigation projects: will the new land under irrigation be used for poppy cultivation rather than for producing legal cash and subsistence crops? The presence of food aid compounds the problem because, at least in theory, food distribution allows farmers to devote more land to poppy cultivation – the crop with the highest profit margin – and recover missing food items by pleading for food aid. In this case, food aid

²⁸ The NAC believes that their projects “have helped create a vibrant local community, thereby enhancing its ‘profit margin’. This in turn has been a major motivation for the local population to return to the village and invest in the commercial project cited above” (NAC 2004f).

²⁹ The US agency USAID puts the cost for building one school at USD 150,000. The NAC, by comparison, estimate the costs at USD 80,000. This example explains why the subletting of USAID engineering contracts are very profitable and hence abused.

subsidises poppy cultivation. The WFP representatives in Badakshan were confident that their food distribution only benefited needy families and could not be claimed by undeserving families or individuals. Local market surveys in Faizabad were felt to confirm this view. Nonetheless, the NAC suspects that at least some of their irrigation channels have been used for poppy cultivation in contravention of written agreements signed by the local communities. The NAC has for this reason decided to halt further irrigation projects until this has been investigated further. The importance of “do no harm” is often stressed, but it might be that the stricter guidelines need to be put in place when implementing irrigation projects in poppy cultivation areas or zones.

Recommendation 9: Construction and engineering activities presently constitute the major part of the Norwegian NGOs’ project activities and are considered integral to their portfolio. Nonetheless, the organisations should ensure that they only contract work in remote areas and as far as possible utilise local suppliers for contracting supplies. The NAC especially should carefully consider the local impact of irrigation projects in the Badakshan province and take steps to prevent them from inadvertently promoting poppy cultivation.

Health sector

Both the NAC and NCA are involved in the health sector. This sector is rapidly changing through, as already described, a government-led outsourcing programme using the PPA mechanism to deliver basic health services to clusters of districts and provinces. This process has among other things put an end to the old-style service delivery and raised the minimum standards for basic health services through the institution of the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS). In the field, the PPA process has been funded by the EU and USAID, which cater for the eastern and southern provinces respectively. The NAC has recently secured a contract under a USAID-funded PPA process in the Nangarhar province. Prior to undertake this bid, the NAC revised its former policy of not undertaking projects funded by money originating in the US. For the NAC, the main reason for engaging in the bidding process was to avoid scaling down the health sector projects and, at a later stage, being forced to abandon the health sector altogether. The new PPA process has not had a comparable impact on NCA’s health sector projects because the organisation is not directly involved in the PPA process and is a funding rather than an implementing agency. In the field, the review team visited a Norad gap-funded health project (“Women, water, and health”, Bamyan province) implemented by the local NCA partner CAWC. In projects like this, the engineering part often takes precedence (building latrines, drilling boreholes etc.) and the potential health benefits, especially for women, are usually not measured or demonstrated but expected to follow as a result of the infrastructure itself. As mentioned above, the NAC is also strongly involved in the health sector, especially in the Nangarhar province. The team met representatives of the NAC’s health sector partners but did not visit health sector projects in the field (see Appendixes 1 and 3).

Recommendation 10: The health sector is weakly developed in rural Afghanistan and the Norwegian NGOs, especially the NAC, contribute significantly to local health service delivery. Nonetheless, the current restructuring of the health sector will require better in-house health sector expertise and cofunding resources than used to be the case. The Norwegian NGOs (and their respective partners) are advised to consider carefully their strategic role in the future Afghan health sector as part of their internal policy review.

Education sector

Both the Norwegian NGOs are involved in the education sector, but the education sector is most important to the NAC, which has worked in all aspects of the education field since

taking up work in the Ghazni province in the mid-1980s.³⁰ Like the health sector, the education sector is also undergoing fundamental change in Afghanistan, especially through the new government-led National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Previously, schools were often built following direct contact between the local community and the NGO. This is no longer the case and the Ministry of Education (MoE) is now in charge of planning the construction of new schools according to the MoE's so-called "priority list". In general, the construction of schools is now done through a tender process comparable to that of the PPA, where shortlisted NGOs compete for construction contracts in NSP clusters (most often a cluster of districts) supervised by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). At present, the NSP process is not being fully implemented, but over time this will mean that construction of schools and other educational facilities will be awarded to a single successful bidder. What this will mean for the NAC, which has been strongly involved in the construction of schools, is as yet too early to say.

In 2003, the Norad budget cuts prompted the NAC to close its local project office in the Ghazni province and end its support to the local schools. This support was principally in the form of food-for-education for students and food-for-work used as an incentive for salaried teachers. The representatives from the local educational department in Ghazni city strongly deplored that fact that the NAC had closed the projects and urged them to be reinstated. In addition to building and rehabilitating schools, the NAC is also involved in the distribution of books and stationery, running teacher training and literacy courses subsidised by the WFP through the food-for-education (FFE) model. The NAC has also actively promoted girls' schools, more recently by insisting on building co-educational schools for boys and girls instead of the more traditional approach of building separate girls' schools. In the field the team visited a female literacy programme in two villages in the Bamyan province run by NCA's NGO partner CAWC.³¹ The team also visited briefly two schools built by the NAC in Badakshan.

Recommendation 11: The Norwegian NGOs' long-term work in the education sector has been significant. The Norwegian NGOs are advised to strengthen further their emphasis on the education sector in line with government priorities, and carefully consider placing more emphasis on developing and disseminating new teaching and training methods. The Norwegian NGOs are further advised to strengthen their in-house education expertise in preparation for the upcoming NSP process.

Environment

Of the two organisations, only the NAC was involved in environmental rehabilitation through the creation of tree nurseries that also function as public gardens (see NAC 2003a). The review team did not have the opportunity to appraise the rehabilitation projects in detail, but their impact seems first of all to have encouraged farmers to plant trees on private land for use as building material and to create small orchards. In a few select field sites, the NAC had created demonstration plots where trees had been planted to stabilise slopes prone to sliding. While the Badakshan province is prone to damaging flash floods, it was felt that stabilising hill slopes was only rarely carried out outside "demonstration plots", hence had little practical impact beyond possibly alerting villagers to the potential benefit of engaging in this form of protective tree planting. Nonetheless, at a time where environmental projects have gone out of fashion, the team considers the NAC's work in this sector to be locally significant and to have considerably increased afforestation on private land as well as promoted the establishment of private orchards.

³⁰ The NAC also funds two schools (a high school and a secondary school) in Peshawar catering for Afghan refugees (see Appendix 3).

³¹ The literacy programmes were not funded by NORAD and are therefore not reviewed here.

Recommendation 12: The NAC is advised to undertake an independent technical review of its environmental sector programmes in order to ensure that the programmes conform to the current best practice in this field.

Coherence and integration

As mentioned earlier (section II), the Norwegian NGOs operate in a number of field localities spread over many provinces. This strategy naturally leads to some fragmentation of project activities and to problems with creating synergy effects. While both organisations have made plans to reduce the regional coverage and over time specialise in fewer sectors, neither has come very far in instituting any of these changes. In 2004, however, NCA took a first step in reducing its regional coverage by earmarking virtually all the gap funds and parts of the Norad frame funding for the Uruzgan province.

Currently, the Norwegian NGOs' strategy could be summarised as "multi-sectoral, multi-province and multi-partner". Based on the field visits, we see some limitations in this approach and a danger in scattering different types of intervention across a number of field sites. In some cases scattering is necessary in order to achieve a fair ethnic and religious distribution in an area or region. This notwithstanding, project scattering reduces the combined impact of projects and imposes many new administrative demands on the organisation as well as making monitoring more difficult and time consuming. It is important to take local needs into consideration when planning interventions, but offering a wide range of project interventions tailored to local needs means that each project becomes more costly and less efficient than otherwise necessary. There is no simple solution to this problem, but both reducing the provincial coverage and developing a field of project specialisation would promote coherence and improve efficiency. The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has for a number of years specialised in the water sector with very good results. The Norwegian NGOs would likewise be advised to seek some specialisation in their current multi-sector approach despite the fact that they have traditionally favoured a broad-based development model. The purpose of such a programme change is not to abandon successful projects, but to develop a "flagship" programme where the organisation is strategically and technically a lead agency and targeted interventions bear the organisation's stamp of proficiency.

Recommendation 13: Following an internal policy review process, the Norwegian NGOs should reduce their regional coverage in order to promote programme coherence and improve efficiency. NCA and the NAC are further advised to develop a "strategic programme area" that builds on their current in-house competence and extensive field-based experience.

Coordination

The obstacles facing development aid and NGO coordination in Afghanistan have already been spelled out in the first section of this report. An important question is the Norwegian NGOs' specific contribution to NGO coordination. Have they, for example, been active in promoting NGO coordination either regionally where they work or through the appropriate NGO bodies? The answer is yes and no. Yes, in particular NCA has been an active member of the ACBAR steering committee, but has apart from this not been particularly active in advocating stronger and more comprehensive NGO coordination. Both NGOs have, on the other hand, taken part in all relevant meetings at ACBAR, in the ministerial CG committees, as well as regionally in meetings chaired by the local UNAMA representatives. This means that the Norwegian NGOs have participated fully in the coordination process and have complied with the current guidelines (if any), but have not been a driving force in the process. Whether Norwegian NGOs should be a driving force in coordination is a moot point: as relatively small development actors in Afghanistan they should not be expected to lead the

process, especially after NGO coordination has been mandated to UNAMA (UNAMA Online) and with ACBAR giving priority to NGO advocacy rather than coordination as such. Since the new NGO sector legislation has not been passed, it is difficult to predict how this will influence overall NGO sector coordination.

Another question is whether in their project-level interventions the Norwegian NGOs have sought to avoid duplicating the work of other NGOs and have avoided working in areas already saturated with NGO activity. In general, both NGOs work in areas where NGO activity is not very high and duplication of NGO activities not a serious problem.³² This said, the quality of regional coordination varies a lot and also depends on the capability of the local government, which in many cases has neither the required resources or capacity nor the expertise needed to undertake effective coordination of NGO activities. A related problem is that until recently many NGOs – not the ones reviewed here – staunchly resisted coordination by the government. For the past couple of years, however, there has been a growing willingness to engage in NGO coordination, which is a sharp break with the former policies of some NGOs that were very clear about their status as non-governmental organisations. This also extended to the question of building planning capacity in the government, which many NGOs likewise considered outside their NGO mandate.³³ Presently, many NGOs in Bamyan have also taken up projects under the new National Solidarity Programme (NSP).

Recommendation 14: The Norwegian NGOs should continue to promote coordination efforts through their membership and ACBAR and in their meetings with UNAMA. When the new NGO legislation is implemented, the NGOs should quickly abide by it and ensure that their projects and programmes support its letter and spirit.

Collaboration

An important question in this review is whether the Norwegian NGOs have taken up collaboration with the new Afghan administration and its ministries and agencies. During the field visit, the team met with ministers, vice-ministers and advisors in the departments most central to the work of the NAC and NCA (Appendix 1). Working with the newly established Afghan ministries is very important, despite the fact that in some of them the planning and managerial expertise is not very high and corruption rampant. In others, however, there is a rapidly growing capacity, due in part to the appointment of a large number of expatriates hired on short- or long-term contracts funded by INGOs. The Norwegian NGOs have actively cooperated with the various line ministries and their staff serve on two advisory Consultative Group (CG) committees in the two departments where their expertise is considered important: the NAC and NCA serve on the CG committees of the Ministry of Health (“CG on Health and Nutrition”) and the Ministry of Education (Education Consultative Group – ECG) respectively. To summarise, the Norwegian NGOs are strongly involved in departmental projects and as CG committee members. NCA in particular has since 2002 provided extensive support to selected ministries and government institutions. The NAC, on the other hand, collaborates with ministries at the provincial level in both the education and health programmes.

Recommendation 15: The Norwegian NGOs are advised to continue and, where possible, expand their collaboration with national and provincial authorities. In the central government, both in-house capacity and collaboration with NGOs is increasing. In the provinces, however, the local government remain understaffed and underfunded, yet with a mandate to plan and monitor regional interventions. The organisations are therefore encouraged to explore ways in

³² The Bamyan province has traditionally been neglected by the Afghan government because the province’s majority population is ethnic Hazaras, who as Shia Muslims are a religious minority.

³³ In the Bamyan province the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is also taking part in NGO coordination meetings.

which collaboration and capacity building in the local government could be integrated into the programme design.

Innovation

An important question in this review is what “added value” the Norwegian NGOs have brought to the overall development effort in Afghanistan and especially to the role of innovation. In the context of this report innovation is defined as “programmes or projects that break new ground in supporting vulnerable groups, regions or sectors of the Afghan society”. In general, the overall project portfolio of the Norwegian NGOs under review could be labelled “traditional”: there is some project level innovation, yet most of the portfolio remains in traditional NGO sector activities. Of course, innovation involves an element of risk and therefore also of failure. Since NGOs need to report regularly about project activities and results to their donors, they may be disinclined to initiate pilot studies which in the end will not be praised for their innovation but criticised for their failure. Given this limitation, it is understandable that innovation is not very prominent in either organisation.

There is currently a critical development gap between Pashtun and non-Pashtun areas because security concerns have made many NGOs unwilling to take up work in Pashtun-dominated provinces and districts. This, in turn, is believed to increase local frustration and deprivation, fuelling more violence and anti-Western sentiment. In this context, NCA’s decision to take up work in the conflict-prone Uruzgan province was an important and innovative decision.

Similarly, the decision to support the Women Shelter project run by NCA’s NGO partner AWSDC was an important yet risky decision to come to the aid adolescent and adult women who for various reasons need protection against families, in-laws or spouses or are orphaned and hence need someone acting as a chaperon (AWSDC 2003). The fact that this project is the first of its kind in Afghanistan has made supporting it all the more important. The team was impressed with AWSDC’s work in running the Shelter project which demonstrates the importance of personal commitment for a project’s quality.

Similarly, NCA’s long-term support for peace-building initiatives through its NGO partner CPAU is important, although the local impact of these peace efforts is difficult to gauge. Finally, NCA has worked to build competence in the water sector in collaboration with Afghan ministries. To this end the organisation has promoted a revival of traditional water management techniques (local water managers) as well as improved national water planning through seconding a Norwegian water expert to the MMRD.

Like NCA, the NAC’s overall work is within traditional development sectors with an emphasis on engineering and construction activities. Nonetheless, the NAC has made important contributions to supporting new civil society actors through its critical support to the establishment of the P.E.N. Club in Kabul. The NAC has also made contributions to developing new teaching methodologies and advocating innovative models aimed at increasing school attendance – especially among women – such as food-for-education (FFE) programmes, which in 2002 covered about 50 schools with about 34,000 students. In a situation where foreign NGOs have come under increasing criticism for their extravagant lifestyle the NAC has put the solidarity ideal into practice by instituting a more frugal approach. Moreover, the NAC has consistently targeted remote and under-served provinces and this is highly commendable.

Recommendation 16: The Norwegian NGOs should make sure that in addition to carrying out traditional development projects, they cultivate new and unproven concepts and ideas and develop these into fundable projects that can improve the quality of their service delivery.

Beneficiaries

During the Afghan war (and after 1989, the civil war), it was common among NGOs to earmark specific sections of the war-torn society for targeted interventions and emergency relief. This in particular concerned disabled persons, women, children and female-headed households. In the present context, targeted interventions of this type are becoming less common, a result of the ending of hostilities and a concomitant shift from emergency relief to long-term development. Consequently, we see also in the project interventions of NAC and NCA that targeted interventions are now the exception rather than rule. In general, the interventions can be characterised as broad-based and meant to reach a large number of people – a village, community or area – with interventions planned to aid their general uplift. In the present post-war context in Afghanistan, this trickle-down approach to development seems a sound policy although there are still large sections of society with special needs such as traumatised war victims, the disabled, widows and orphans. However, in a small section of their project portfolio, targeted interventions are used to aid women and children especially. Thus, NCA still runs an ambulating malnourishment programme, providing supplementary feeding to underweight and malnourished children as well as dispensing basic health advice to the mothers.³⁴ NCA also runs a female shelter in Kabul which provides protection and training to a small number of girls and women who for various reasons need protection from families, relatives or husbands and orphaned girls who lack male relatives (see INNOVATION)

The NAC likewise runs a few targeted programmes aimed at orphaned children in Faizabad (Badakshan). The Faizabad orphanage provides a home as well as support for skills training and formal education to male and female youth and a few female infants (down to the age of three). Because of Norad budget cuts, the NAC in 2003 decided to end its support to the orphanage by the end of 2004 and has organised for the children to be transferred to a government-run orphanage in Faizabad (NAC 2004f). Several of the older male residents expressed concern about their future and the implications the NAC's decision to end its support would have for their educational plans.³⁵ The team found that the Faizabad orphanage provided critical support to a small and very vulnerable section of the Afghan society where no governmental facility could offer comparable living standards and care. Still, it needs to be acknowledged that the Faizabad orphanage does not fit well into the present NAC project profile and that the handover of the orphanage to the local government is therefore necessary. For this reason, the handover of the orphanage should be seen part of an effort to reduce the vulnerability of other programmes.

Recommendation 17: The Norwegian NGOs are advised to continue their current support to especially vulnerable groups such as widows and children. It is important that targeted interventions of this type are not entered into without having a clear strategy for handover to the government and/or takeover by other NGOs in order to shield vulnerable groups from sudden programme closures. To accomplish this, the NGOs need to keep informed about the progress of the proposed National Vulnerability Program (NVP) and the supporting line ministries.³⁶

Monitoring and internal reviews

The role of monitoring is very important, yet in many cases monitoring is given low priority due to lack of time, lack of money or both. The two NGOs under review both monitor their projects either through their own staff or that of their NGO partners. Both organisations have

³⁴ The Ministry of Health has decided to close all malnourishment programmes in Afghanistan. The project will therefore close by the end of 2004.

³⁵ The NAC also runs a "foster-mum" project in Badakshan where widows rear tree seedlings against payment. Due to time constraints this project was not visited by the team.

³⁶ Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MM&D) and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (ML&SA).

also at regular intervals undertaken internal and external reviews of their programmes. For example, the NAC has undertaken various internal and external monitoring reports of its health (NAC 2000), education (NCA 2003c) and engineering sector projects (Western and et al. 1999). NCA has conducted a study of its ACT Appeals (Strand, Hakimyar et al. 2003) but not, it seems, carried out independent reviews of its NGO partners and their field-based programmes except for a study of its tuberculosis programme (Jadoon 2002).

In general, the team found that monitoring is biased towards quantitative measurement and the emphasis is on getting the calculations right. There are reasons for this, for example that these data are more readily available and require less time and resources to collect and analyse. Qualitative monitoring is more difficult and time consuming to obtain, leaves a fair amount of the interpretation of the findings to the person carrying it out and is overall less “precise”. However, while the team sympathises with the need for quick and measurable monitoring, especially in an early post-war phase, more emphasis should be placed on qualitative monitoring right from the start of a project. This is also needed to measure the impact of a project or intervention. To do this, it is necessary to establish parameters against which the project impact can be measured, meaning that more time needs to be spent on establishing baseline data. As a rule, the larger and more long-term the project, the more time and resources need to be devoted to establishing these data.

In general, the team found that project evaluation is infrequent both in-house and externally. The monitoring is weakest in the social components of the projects and is mainly quantitative. As could be expected, monitoring is weakest in very remote provinces and in provinces where local hostilities prevents field monitoring. An example of the first is the NAC’s health sector work in the Nuristan province where monitoring is undertaken by the local MoE employees. An example of the second scenario is NCA’s work in the Uruzgan province where even service delivery is difficult and monitoring in reality dispensed with. NCA has routines for field monitoring of partner implemented projects, but the team was not provided with copies of internal monitoring reports. As trusted NGO partners for a number of years, NCA felt assured that their work complied with NCA’s general operational guidelines and the specifics in the project documents.³⁷ While the team has no specific information to the contrary, it would still seem prudent for NCA to consider stronger field-based monitoring and quality control of the NGO partners’ work. This could, for example, be done as part of the planned NGO partner review.

In addition to monitoring strictly defined, the Norwegian NGOs have not undertaken minor pilot studies to field test new approaches or study the local impact of long-running interventions. In this area, we believe, the NGOs under review could have achieved more, for example by field testing new approaches or trying to measure the impact of their projects through minor pilot studies. Recently, a large pilot study of women working as traditional birth attendants (TBAs) (undertaken by the Consultative Group at the Ministry of Health, of which the NAC is a member) was able to show that TBAs had no significant impact on child mortality. This finding, hence, contradicted years of conventional wisdom on the impact of TBAs in reducing child mortality. Although similar studies may be outside the scope of smaller NGOs, there is no reason why NGOs such as NCA and the NAC cannot challenge conventional wisdom by undertaking smaller strategic studies as a part of their field-based programmes.³⁸

³⁷ NCA did not supply the team with documents specifying the operational guidelines applying to the work of the NGO partners. This need not imply that such guidelines do not exist.

³⁸ A subject that comes to mind is the possible impact of building irrigation channels in areas suitable for poppy cultivation. It would, for example, be possible to visit selected field sites irrigated by project-funded channels during the harvest, and chart how much of the irrigated fields has been used to grow various legal and illegal crops. From such studies and discussions with farmers it would have been possible to disseminate ideas and findings of how irrigation projects could be implemented in poppy growing areas without promoting poppy cultivation.

Recommendation 18: The Norwegian NGOs are advised to streamline monitoring so that monitoring reports (perhaps with a common format) are easy to collect, simple to understand and can quickly be used as a management tool. When feasible, the organisations should undertake minor pilot studies aimed at field testing critical programmes and interventions.

Advocacy

In Afghan society, public advocacy is rapidly increasing and there are a growing number of smaller and larger NGOs and organisations dealing with the promotion of civil liberties. Supporting nascent civil society actors would hence make an important contribution to strengthening civil society. Initially, a number of key areas would lend themselves to NGO sector advocacy such as:

- gender mainstreaming
- civic education (citizens' rights and obligations)
- peace education
- developing a vibrant civil society

The two organisations under review have been involved only to a limited degree in public advocacy, either alone or through their NGO partners. Nonetheless, the NAC has been instrumental in aiding the creation of the local branch of the international P.E.N. Club in Kabul and helping it to find office space. The NAC has also been involved in channelling aid to the Kabul Theatre through separate funding organised through its branch in Bergen in collaboration with the local theatre, "Den nationale scene". As mentioned elsewhere, NCA has for a long time supported an Afghan NGO (CPAU) involved in peace education and peace-building, but has not sought out new or additional NGO actors which could further strengthen this field. NCA has provided critical support for the Kabul-based Shelter project and initiated cooperation with two new women NGOs, but has not advocated gender and human rights issues in other civil society contexts.

Overall, we would have expected more informal contact with civil society actors than appears to have been the case, actors that in the future could have become NGO partners. While both organisations have strived to ensure gender mainstreaming in the projects as well as the organisation, it is worth noting that there are no Afghan women in senior management positions in either organisation. However, this is probably related to working in a male-dominated society and the problems of finding women capable and willing to take on such jobs. One solution would be to promote women from inside the organisation and provide them with extra training and encouragement.³⁹

Recommendations 19: The Norwegian NGOs should strengthen the civil sector part of their current portfolio by devoting more funds to this sector and cultivate emerging civil society actors with the aim of developing strategic sections of Afghan civil society. Which sections to prioritise should be identified as part of the internal policy and strategy review. The organisations are further advised to prioritise women in internal training and staff promotions and seek out civil society actors working to promote women's rights in Afghanistan.

³⁹ NCA is in the process of hiring a female gender specialist.

Section IV: Lessons learned and conclusion

Summary: This report has pointed out the many obstacles facing the Norwegian NGOs during the difficult transition period 2000–04. In this section there is an attempt to pull out some of the specific and general lessons learned from instituting Norad/MFA-funded programmes in post-war Afghanistan.

Lessons learned

In Afghanistan, the state-building process was slow and incremental and only after 2002 were the state and government institutions in place that were needed to consider programme restructuring. This also entailed a change of minds, in the sense that during the Taliban regime the NGOs were expected (and perhaps also advised) to minimise their contact with the regime. In the post-Taliban era from late 2001 and onwards, the opposite applied – the NGOs were now expected to work closely with the new interim government. This turnaround did not come overnight, because NGOs by their very nature also do not want to compromise their operational freedom. The post-Taliban Afghanistan therefore necessitated an adaptational process whereby the Norwegian NGOs gradually strengthened their contacts with the interim government and took up collaboration with those closest to their core programmes. **The lesson to draw from this is that policy change takes time and will only pick up once the political situation has stabilised enough to make programme changes feasible. If policy changes are required during post-war transition, they need to be supported by strong economic incentives (see below).**

This review has shown that there is a difference in policy outlook between the Norwegian NGOs and that of their Norwegian donor agencies (Norad/MFA). The former are bound first of all by their organisational mandate and country policies while the latter are bound by the goals of Norwegian development policy as well as by foreign policy goals in the region or country in question. Although these to a considerable degree overlap (especially in that part of the NGOs' work that is funded by the Norad/MFA framework agreement), there are at times diverging views on what should be the priorities and goals in rebuilding in Afghanistan. The need for organisational restructuring on the part of the NGOs is an example of such diverging views. What types of programme are most suited to Afghanistan is another (as illustrated by NCA's water sector programme). The details of the policy dialogue between the NGOs, the embassy and the MFA in Norway are not known. **Still, the lesson to learn from this is that during a transitional phase there is a need for a closer policy dialogue between the parties and a need to communicate Norwegian policy goals and priorities more clearly in order to avoid misunderstandings and misgivings.**

One finding in this review has been that there was considerable continuity in the NGOs' project portfolios during the period (2000–04). The Norwegian NGOs have to a considerable degree continued their broad approach to development and only during the latter half of the period was some form of programme specialisation evident. Two changes stand out: both organisations have taken up collaboration with the government, its ministries and agencies on their own accord. Secondly, both organisations have made efforts towards sectoral specialisation in the education and health sector (NAC) and the water and sanitation sectors (NCA). There is a strong emphasis on construction and rehabilitation projects (under the gap funding), in large part a result of the short funding horizon applying to the gap funds and the considerable engineering competence in the organisations and their partners. There is a tendency to continue with service delivery in a number of provinces and only recently have there been more deliberate attempts at reducing the regional coverage. This continuity is also evident in the general lack of detailed strategy documents and a preference for project-level

planning and reporting that is typical of a situation where the main goal is rapid implementation of emergency relief. **The lesson to draw from this is that there are a number of organisational, staff and project level constraints that impel organisations to continue with established programmes even after the conditions that gave rise to them have irrevocably changed. This is a reflection both of the organisations' own mandate (as opposed to that of the funding agencies) and of the lack of incentives for the organisations to undertake major programme changes.**

The transitional phase in Afghanistan presented the NGOs with a new and rapidly changing environment; new development actors arrived on the scene as did a large number of donors disbursing huge amounts of emergency relief aid (2002). The new Afghan "aid bazaar" led to rising salaries and house rents as well as a loss of key staff to INGOs with a much higher pay scale. The Norwegian NGOs were in other words subject to a very challenging environment that presented them with multiple organisational challenges that strained their administrative capacity. Paradoxically, the gradual political normalisation in Kabul was coupled with a deteriorating security situation in the central and southern provinces as members of the former Taliban regime regrouped. This too posed additional challenges for project implementation and monitoring. The rational response to political insecurity and uncertainty is to preserve the status quo. This, then, is probably another reason for the need to avoid making policy changes that could expose the organisations and staff to undue risk. The fact that the NGO sector coordination was so weak in the period covered here (2000–04) could have been another reason for not undertaking unilateral policy and programme changes. **The lesson to draw from this is that the uncertainty which characterises the transitional phase is a disincentive to undertaking major policy and programme changes, changes that later could disadvantage the organisation or lead to financial losses.**

One finding from this review is that it is not only the political and security situation in the host country that determines the project portfolio, but also the aid priorities among donor agencies in Norway that in turn decide the level and type of funding being made available to Norwegian NGOs in Afghanistan. During the period 2000–2004 there has been a number of important changes in Norwegian bilateral aid to Afghanistan. First, both the Norwegian NGOs have been put under the framework agreement: NCA in 2001 and the NAC in 2003. This change signalled that a new era of long-term development had begun. In 2002, a new funding chapter was introduced, transitional assistance (gap). This funding regime targeted countries emerging from violent conflict and civil war such as Afghanistan, which has since been a major recipient of gap funding. A year later, in 2003, the ARTF was instituted, a new multilateral funding mechanism which Norway has been an important contributor to and supporter of. To summarise, during the period under review here (2000–04) there were major changes in the size and type of Norwegian bilateral funding to Afghanistan. The NGOs have overall benefited from these changes in economic terms, but it has also exposed them to a much more demanding administrative workload and operational requirements that, in particular in the first part of the period, strained their administrative capacity and diminished their ability to institute policy and programme changes. **The changes made to the funding regimes were meant to strengthen the role of the Afghan government in development and the funding made available to the Norwegian NGOs. This review cannot assess the impact of the ARTF funding mechanism, but in light of the concern over the Afghan government's legitimacy, the decision to give full support to the ARTF seems a wise one and is supported by current research. The increased (short-term) funding to the Norwegian NGOs following the fall of the Taliban regime may inadvertently have delayed policy and programme changes.**

The tripartite funding regime – frame, gap and emergency relief – that provides most of the funding to the Norwegian NGOs mixes long-term and short-term objectives. This may explain why organisational restructuring was slow to get started. This in particular was the case in the first part of the period under review (2001–02) when the gap and emergency relief

funding, either separately or combined, was larger than that received from other funding sources/types. As has been argued already (see previous section), there are indications that the mix of short-term and long-term objectives that this combined funding regime entails has been an obstacle to programme restructuring. Thus, it could be argued that an unexpected outcome of this funding regime was a blurring of the need for shifting from emergency relief to long-term development aid. In other words, there seems to have been a mismatch between the economic incentives in the funding regime and the Norad/MFA policy objective of promoting long-term development planning on the part of the NGOs. The gap funds account for an important part of the funding to both NCA and the NAC, yet, for both organisations there is at times a large difference between the sums applied for and that awarded by Norad/MFA. **The lesson to draw from this is that funding regimes that mix long-term and short-term policy goals may inadvertently promote the latter at the expense of the former. For the gap funds especially, the huge discrepancy between the amount applied for and that awarded suggests that a closer dialogue is needed between Norad/MFA and the NGOs.**

As shown in the report, the Afghan reconstruction process has to a large degree been mandated to the NGO sector. More specifically, the state and the NGO sector have chosen a division of labour that, broadly speaking, assigns planning (countrywide and sector-wise) to the ministries and project-level implementation to the NGOs following competitive bidding (the NSP is an example of this approach). This division of labour runs the risk of undermining the legitimacy of the Afghan state because the results are credited to the NGO sector. In the short term there is no simple solution to this problem because the state lacks the capacity to undertake rapid service delivery, and postponing service delivery until such capacity is present will rapidly undermine the legitimacy of the state. **The general lesson to learn from this is that weak states with a rudimentary planning and implementation capacity, government service delivery and planning capacity must be built simultaneously with the active participation of the NGO sector. In general, the NGO sector has been much better at service delivery than capacity building and this further means that the NGO sector needs to redefine its traditional role and prioritise capacity building.⁴⁰ To succeed, the NGOs need support from funding agencies, which must fine-tune funding mechanisms that promote capacity building.**

Post-war states such as Afghanistan typically suffer from severe security problems that prevent service delivery in sections of the country which are typically those areas where assistance is most badly needed. In turn, this lack of service delivery buttresses the power of local warlords and insurgents whose support in the local population is based on the absence of help from the central government. In Afghanistan, the short-term solution to such problems has been to mandate service delivery to Afghan NGO partners which undertake rapid service delivery, often at considerable personal risk. This solution is imperfect because neither is there a way to ensure that the neediest benefit nor are monitoring interventions possible. **The general lesson to learn from this is that in weak states, service delivery should early on target insecure areas to prevent them from becoming bases of civil unrest and warlordism. Because food aid is easily abused and can create aid dependence, NGOs are advised to prioritise health, education and simple infrastructure projects.**

In Afghanistan, the many indigenous NGOs form the backbone of service delivery, either independently or as partners of foreign NGOs such as NCA and the NAC. With increased demand for their services, their numbers have mushroomed, as have their funding sources. Many of them now attract funding from many different donors, yet there is little donor co-ordination. Moreover, their implementing capacity is usually not given due consideration and capacity building is not prioritised. **The general lesson to learn from this is that during post-war recovery, much of the service delivery tends to be shouldered by indigenous**

⁴⁰ For a more comprehensive analysis of this problem, see (Goodhand 2002).

NGOs, often the only actors capable of working in remote rural areas with weak security. This means that in the early post-war phase, indigenous NGOs and their staff should be prioritised for capacity building. To accomplish this objective, better donor co-ordination is needed to ensure that NGOs are not being “overstretched” and have the necessary capacity and expertise to carry out projects successfully and safely.

Conclusions

The two Norwegian NGOs under review are subject to complex operational constraints – political and security-wise, as well as organisational – which are outlined in the first and second parts of this report. The final assessment of their performance needs to take these into account. The years 2001–04 were a difficult transitional period for Afghanistan, which suddenly moved a country ravaged by a long period of civil war into the modern peace-building arena. Afghanistan, which for years had been neglected by the international community, suddenly attracted a massive aid package from a range of donor countries. The NGO sector was at the centre of this process and was soon mandated with the task of rebuilding the country. To this end country was flooded with aid money, much of it controlled by INGOs. The state-building process, however, took much longer to be implemented and the “new” Afghanistan did not emerge overnight. Instead, it was a slow and incremental process and only in 2003 were some of the vital state functions such as a rudimentary bureaucracy, a modicum of peace and stability and mechanisms for channelling aid (the ARTF) established, allowing the NGO sector to consider moving from emergency assistance to long-term aid. The fact that this report finds few *major* policy changes during this period (2001–04) can, in part, be explained by the fact that the nascent state-building process only emerged at the very end of this period. This report also points to another possible reason for the Norwegian NGOs’ “sluggish” policy approach: the Norad/MFA tripartite funding mechanism was a disincentive for undertaking major policy changes. Busy and at times overstretched with implementing emergency assistance to refugees and IDPs, the organisations had neither any spare time nor an economic incentive to think ahead and plan for the next phase of Afghanistan’s reconstruction. In addition, both the NAC and NCA felt bound by their very wide organisational mandates to help and support Afghanistan and its peoples: narrow specialisation in service delivery was felt to fit neither with this mandate nor with the goals of their respective organisations. In both organisations, the main aim was to deliver a wide range of services in the form of well thought out projects. Thus, the combination of the Afghan post-war context and the funding mechanism, as well organisational traits, explains why the NAC and NCA portfolios continued to be engaged with traditional development sector projects, including construction and engineering, throughout the period under review.

For the NAC especially, its twin organisational mandate – membership organisation in Norway, development actor in Afghanistan – made running the organisation all the more difficult and laid the foundation for factional struggle among its members. Despite this, the fact remains that even as small and at times as unruly an organisation as the NAC has managed to deliver good results in Afghanistan. This review shows that these results have often come about despite the Norwegian part of the organisation rather than because of it. This outcome is probably a result of the fact that when taken seriously solidarity can make a difference. But an organisation cannot in the long run survive without instituting routines that ensure its financial viability. The NAC is at this stage now and needs to complete the restructuring of the organisation and to strengthen its fundraising expertise. Too many Afghans – staff as well as beneficiaries – depend on the organisation to allow a squandering of scarce development funds due to late or missing reporting. Until recently, the NAC was marginalised by recent political developments in Afghanistan – the preference for larger and more coherent projects awarded as part of government-controlled bidding processes – but also by the NGO’s small size and internal organisation in Norway. Nonetheless, the NAC has made important changes in both its staff and managerial practice that if carried through, will

improve the organisation's efficiency and financial viability. It is also worth noting that the NAC works, and often works very well, with an almost purely Afghan staff. Moreover, the NAC has recently sought to limit the vulnerability of its programmes and funding by consolidating the main programmes geographically, phasing out or limiting projects and activities that are outside that focus and submitting funding proposals to other donors. The fact that the NAC has recently secured contracts from the Japanese Embassy (Kabul), the German government and USAID further underlines the positive development in the organisation.⁴¹

NCA is a professional organisation whose strength lies in its comprehensive programme, solid reporting routines, large professional staff and long-term cooperation with a network of Afghan NGOs. Exactly for this reason, one would have expected the organisation to push harder for programme changes that would have placed NCA in the forefront as an innovator in the long-term development programmes for post-Taliban Afghanistan. As explained above, however, there were a number of disincentives that prevented this from happening. This does not mean that NCA did not institute any programme changes – it did. Most important among these was the explicit support to peace-building programmes at a time when this was still a novelty. NCA also prepared a specialised water programme in line with the organisation's global water policy. The original programme was shelved for lack of funding and Norad/MFA support, but some parts of it were carried out through internal funding. More generally, this example points to the question of whether NGO programmes should be in line with organisational policies or streamlined to comply with Norwegian policy priorities in Afghanistan. For NCA, which works in a number of countries and regions of the world, there is also the question of how to balance diversity (“country programmes”) with organisational coherence (“global policies”) in a disparate country portfolio. These questions aside, NCA as an organisation has a tradition of working with and cultivating personal contacts at the ministry level and this is probably one reason why NCA has such strong links with Afghan ministries and instituted cooperation with several of them early on, especially in the water and rural development sector.

Some have said that “more money doesn't necessarily mean better projects”. In this particular case both the NAC and NCA have been recipients of large amounts of bilateral funding spread over many years. In general, the organisations have used this funding to develop and execute traditional development sector projects. The most innovative and exciting of these projects have, we believe, not been the most costly ones, but the ones run by a small and dedicated staff. In this sense, it is true that more money need not mean better projects. Moreover, the rules that apply to large parts of NCA's and the NAC's budget portfolios (the gap funds especially) have meant that they have continued working in the engineering and construction sector, mostly to improve local infrastructure. Although this is very much needed, it would be unwise to expect the Norwegian NGOs to plan for a narrow sectoral specialisation when there is no money and hence no financial incentive. This means that if sectoral specialisation and reduced regional coverage are wanted, the funding regime needs to support them (the carrot approach) or more “strings” must be attached to the funding regime to bring them about (the stick approach). Expecting that the Norwegian NGOs will undertake major programme changes, often in projects built up over many years, is unrealistic without strong economic incentives.

⁴¹ However, the controversy over the USAID contract exposes the NAC's internal “fault-lines” and the tensions within the Norwegian section of the organisation (Zachrisen 2004).

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Appendix 1: List of interviews

Interviews and meetings: Afghanistan

| Date | Persons met | Title | Organisation | Place |
|--------|---|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| 6-Sep | Helene Sand Andresen | First secretary (DHM) | Norw. Embassy | Kabul |
| | Nina Schelderup | First secretary (Dev. affairs) | Norw. Embassy | Kabul |
| | Johan-Lorentz Wigand | First secretary (Pol./Sec. affairs) | Norw. Embassy | Kabul |
| | Per Westborg | Res. representative | NCA | Kabul |
| | Manga Torvund | Progr. coordinator | NCA | Kabul |
| | Faridoon Daudzai | Progr. manager | NCA | Kabul |
| | Ingeborg Gamlem | Finance and adm. coordinator | NCA | Kabul |
| | Hassan Ahmed | Adm. and advocacy managers | NCA | Kabul |
| | NCA senior staff briefing | Staff members | NCA | Kabul |
| 7-Sep | Mr Barekzai | Dep. Minister | MIWRE | Kabul |
| | Ramazan Barchardoust | Minister | MoP | Kabul |
| | Haneef Atmar | Minister | MRRD | Kabul |
| 8-Sep | NCA-partners (<i>see details below</i>) | | NCA | Kabul |
| | Moh. Umer Daudzai | Chief of Staff | TGA | Kabul |
| 9-Sep | Svein Stoveland | Advisor | MRRD/NCA | Kabul |
| | Project visit (Nutrition project) | | NPO/RRAA | Kabul |
| | Project visit (SHELTER project) | | AWSDC | Kabul |
| 10-Sep | Norwegian army officers | | ISAF | Kabul |
| | NCA senior staff briefing (desk review) | | NCA | Kabul |
| 11-Sep | Security briefing - Bamyan | | Norw. Embassy | Kabul |
| 12-Sep | Haji Ahmed | Director | CAWC | Bamyan |
| | Mohammad Rahim Ali Yar | Governor | TGA | Bamyan |
| | Molly Little | Advisor | UNAMA | Bamyan |
| 13-Sep | Village representatives | | | Shiberto |
| | Village representatives | | | Jam Qala |
| 14-Sep | <i>(Return to Kabul)</i> | | | |
| 15-Sep | Astrid E. Sletten | Res. representative | NAC | Kabul |
| | Zamarai Ahmadzai | Dep. director | NAC | Kabul |
| | NAC senior staff meeting | | NAC | Kabul |
| | Ahmad Mushaaede | Minister | MoE | Kabul |
| 16-Sep | Sohailah Sidiq | Minister | MoH | Kabul |
| | NAC partners (<i>see details below</i>) | | NAC | Kabul |
| | Team, joint working session | | | Kabul |
| 18-Sep | NAC senior staff briefing (desk review) | | NAC | Kabul |
| | Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi | Chairman | ANCB | Kabul |
| | Abdul Wali Babarkhil | Director (finance) | ANCB | Kabul |
| | Security briefing - Badakshan | | Norw. Embassy | Kabul |
| 19-Sep | NAC Badakshan staff | | NAC | Faizabad |
| | World Food Project staff | | WFP | Faizabad |
| | NN | Acting Governor | TGA | Faizabad |
| | Provincial <i>shura</i> | | | Faizabad |
| 20-Sep | NAC-Keshem staff | | NAC | Keshem |
| | Local <i>shura</i> | | | Samati |

| | | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Local <i>shura</i> | | | Balouch |
| | Village representatives | | | Qarabolaq |
| 21-Sep | Local <i>shura</i> | | | Farmanquily |
| | Project visit (Faizabad orphanage) | | NAC | Faizabad |
| 22-Sep | (Return to Kabul) | | | |
| 23-Sep | Barbara Stapleton | Advocacy and policy | ACBAR | Kabul |
| | Moh. Hashim Mayar | Progr. coordinator | ACBAR | Kabul |
| | Jesper Frovin Jensen | Country director | SCA | Kabul |
| | Gorm Pedersen | Director | DACAR | Kabul |
| | Michelle Kendal | Ass. country director | CARE | Kabul |
| 24-Sep | Team, joint working session | | | Kabul |
| 25-Sep | Debriefing | | NCA/NAC/Embassy | Kabul |
| 26-Sep | Departure Kabul | | | |

Interviews and meetings: Norway

| | | | | |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------|
| 13-Aug | Nina Schelderup | First secretary | Norw. Embassy | Oslo |
| | Ivar Evensmo | Advisor | NORAD | |
| | Gisle J. Hagen | Dep. director | NORAD | |
| | Per Westborg | Res. rep. | NCA | |
| | Ronny Hansen | Gen. secretary | NAC | |
| | Arne Sæveraas | Progr. coordinator | NCA | |
| 30-Aug | Geir Valle | Senior advisor | NCA | Oslo |
| | Gaim Kebreab | Team leader | NCA | |
| | Ragnhild Olafsson | Accountant | NCA | |
| 19-Oct | Ronny Hansen | General secretary | NAC | Bergen |

NAC partners met

| | | | |
|--------|--------|--|-------|
| 16-Sep | ARC | Afghan Relief Committee | Kabul |
| 16-Sep | AYF | Afghan Youth Foundation | |
| 16-Sep | HAFO | Helping Afghan Farmers Organisation | |
| 16-Sep | IHS | Institute of Health Science, Nangarhar | |
| 16-Sep | IMF | Medical Faculty, Nangarhar | |
| 16-Sep | MoH | Ministry of Health (Prof. Dr General Sohailah Sidiq) | |
| 16-Sep | PMoE | Head of Provincial Education Department, Ghazni | |
| 16-Sep | PMoH | Provincial Directorate of Health of Nangarhar | |
| 16-Sep | School | Bi Bi Aishah Girls High School, Peshawar | |
| 16-Sep | School | Astri Morken (Bi Bi Khajika) Girls Middle School, Peshawar | |
| 16-Sep | UMCA | United Medical Center for Afghans | |

NCA partners met

| | | | |
|-------|----------|--|-------|
| 6-Sep | ADA | Afghan Development Association | Kabul |
| 8-Sep | GRSP | Ghazni Rural Support Program | |
| 8-Sep | NPO/RRAA | Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan | |
| 8-Sep | CPAU | Cooperation for Peace and Unity | |
| 8-Sep | CoAR | Co-ordination of Afghan Relief | |
| 9-Sep | AWSDC | Afghan Women Skills Development Center | |

Appendix 2: Terms of reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A JOINT REVIEW OF LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN THROUGH TWO NORWEGIAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS, THE NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID (NCA) AND THE NORWEGIAN AFGHANISTAN COMMITTEE (NAC).

Background

In the last two and half years the Afghan society has witnessed dramatic changes. The replacement of a fundamentalist Islamic regime with a transitional government, recognised and financially supported by the International Community under UN leadership, has created hopes for an end to almost 30 years of continuous war and for a chance to rebuild and develop the country in a peaceful and democratic manner. However, this is an enormous task that requires coordination and cooperation on all levels, nationally and internationally.

In the past the two Norwegian NGOs, NCA and NAC, have delivered social services to the Afghan population both directly and through local partners, usually working with little or no presence of national authorities. Today their contributions to reconstruction and development are supposed to take place within the overall policy goals and administrative framework of the Afghan Transitional Government. This represents both opportunities as well as challenges to well-established practices on how they relate to national authorities and local partners in the area.

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to assess the experiences made by NCA and NAC project work in Afghanistan since 2000, as anchored in their policy formulations, strategies and project activities. It will also look at how well they adapted to the new political and social environment after 2001. In particular, the review will focus on their cooperation with national and international institutions, their complementary contributions to national development goals and strategies for capacity building of the Afghan civil society. The assessment will have emphasis on lessons learnt, with a special focus on acquired knowledge from working through a period of turbulent transition.

Objectives

The objectives of this review are to assess:

- a. To what extent the Norwegian NGOs have been able to adjust their goals and activities to reflect changes in political conditions and priorities?
- b. To what extent the Norwegian NGOs have been able to complement the main development actors' efforts towards sustainable development, with particular focus on capacity building and poverty reduction?
- c. To what extent the Norwegian NGOs have used innovative and effective strategies to support local partners and help to build a sustainable civil society within a national frame?
- d. To what extent the criteria for support from NORAD (and from MR/HUM in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the extent such funds also were used for the activities under review) have been adhered to during the different stages of the implementation process?

Scope of work

The review will focus on four thematic issues:

1) *Added value*. The review will look for possible effects on local partners and target groups from the Norwegian emphasis on sustainable development and watchdog/advocacy roles.

2) *Collaboration and coherence*. The review will assess the changes made in order to strengthen the national authorities' ability to govern. To what extent did the activities contribute to strengthening government and/or civil society's ability to promote poverty reduction? To what extent did the organisations try to assist the government led consultation group process? Did these NGO-efforts supplement the activities of key national and international development actors? Did coherence have any effect on the Norwegian NGOs basic philosophy and aid principles or on how their activities were actually implemented? If promoting coherence was not a key to organisational restructuring, what was the reason(s)?

3) *Building local capacity*. The review will examine the organisations' partner policies and practical abilities to strengthen the Afghan civil society's capacity within a context of traditional, local power structures. How well did the Norwegian NGOs and their local partners help the civil society to build arenas to express their interest and views? Did this also help the local authorities to improve their services? How much did security issues influence the work?

4) *Development and innovation*. To what degree did projects/programme activities lead to new (viable) methods and structures? What kind of indicators were developed and field tested in order to measure results and effects? What monitoring routines were developed and implemented? How accurately did they measure impacts on vulnerable groups? How was gender issues integrated in project/programme design?

Implementation

The review will combine a desk study of relevant documents and interviews in Norway with a field visit. In Afghanistan, the consultant will have meetings with/make interviews with local representatives of the Norwegian NGOs, their partners, staff at the Norwegian embassy in Kabul and local, regional and national authorities in Afghanistan.

Phase 1 will examine the NGOs' overall development aims and relate that to the rationale and goals given in applications for NORAD support to Afghanistan since 2000. Furthermore, one should look at the project management structures and decision making procedures in order to assess the effectiveness and relevance of organisational responses and adaptive strategies to contextual challenges. Finally, the desk study will analyse the quality of documented output and impact of their work. The findings will be compiled in a desk study report.

Phase 2 will consist of a field visit to project sites in Afghanistan in order to test the preliminary findings from phase 1 and explore the issues in more depth by personal observations, interviews and feedback from partners, target groups and representatives for national and international authorities. The report from phase 1 should be presented for comments from various stakeholders in Afghanistan in order to ensure broad and adequate participation in the review process.

Phase 3 will be compilation of findings, analysis, drafting of report, revisions based on comments on the draft report from the Norwegian organisations, respective embassies and NORAD before submitting the final report.

Reporting

The report shall contain chapters on observations, findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations for follow-up. It shall not exceed 50 pages (excluding annexes) and have an executive summary.

Time Frame

The review will commence in April 2004. Phase 1 is stipulated to 2 weeks, the field visit 3 weeks and report writing, presentations and revisions 2 weeks. NORAD shall receive the final report not later than 15. October 2004. If the security situation in Afghanistan mandates it, the timing and duration of field-study as well as closing date for the review will be renegotiated.

A draft report shall be presented for comments to NORAD, MFA and the respective organisations at a seminar before the final version is submitted.

Consultant and source of funding

The review will be carried out by a team of one consultant from Chr. Michelsens Institute (team leader) and one person from NORAD, Oslo, assisted by two local consultants (one male, one female) during the fieldwork phase. The costs will be covered by NORAD according to parameters set in the frame agreement between the two respective parties.

These Terms of Reference have been approved by:

Sign:

Date:

Appendix 3: Methodology

The difference between a review (“gjennomgang”) and an evaluation (“evaluering”) is not clear-cut. In this report we have placed greater emphasis on lessons learned, the process rather than the result and policies rather than projects. This was also reflected in the methodology chosen, which was participatory and dialogic, gave preference to current rather than former or closed projects and focussed on the ability to change rather than on failures.

The format chosen for the review process included a desk review of documents supplied by the Norwegian NGOs (phase I), to be complemented by a field trip to Afghanistan (phase II).⁴² Thus, this report is based on the findings of the desk review (Knudsen 2004a) and interviews with representatives of the NAC and NCA in Norway, as well as a three-week field trip to Afghanistan (5–26 November 2004). The initial findings were presented to NCA and the NAC in the form of a debriefing session at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kabul (Knudsen et al. 2004). A first draft of the final report was presented at a seminar in Oslo (5 November 2004), where representatives of the major stakeholders were present. The organisations under review, Norad, the MFA and the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul later submitted written commentaries on the draft report. As far as possible, the comments have been incorporated into the present report.

It is important to acknowledge that the findings reported here will necessarily rely on personal judgement and interpretation. Although desirable, formal data collection in the form of questionnaires and interview guides was not used, principally because the time frame for the study did not allow for analysis of this type of data. This said, the review involved lengthy discussions with the senior NGO management of NCA and the NAC and several meetings with senior Afghan bureaucrats and ministers, as well as a number of meetings and interviews with most of the NGO partners of the NAC and NCA (see Appendix 1).

The field visits included two provinces, Bamyán in the central highlands and Badakshan to the north. The selection criteria was first of all safety, secondly their relevance to the NGOs’ portfolios. It is worth noting that the choice of Badakshan province was highly relevant for reviewing the projects of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC), while the choice of Bamyán province was less relevant for a review of Norwegian Church Aid’s (NCA) projects. On the other hand, the team also visited two NCA projects in the greater Kabul area, including an ambulating malnutrition programme as well as a project offering safe housing and skills training to women in need of protection (see section III, PROJECTS). Similar project visits in the vicinity of Kabul were originally planned by NCA, but had to be called off due to time constraints following a delayed return from the Badakshan province field trip. Overall, the two organisations had similar time and opportunities for presenting their projects and partners to the team. Whenever possible, the team gave priority to visiting Norad-funded (“frame and gap”) projects that were still running.

During the field visits to the Bamyán and Badakshan provinces, the review team (Knudsen, Natiq and Basiri) was accompanied by representatives from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kabul, Norad and NCA and the NAC respectively (*). While this increased both the safety and the competence of the group, it gave the field visits a more formal character and official status than would otherwise have been the case. This was particularly pronounced in the Badakshan province trip conducted by the NAC, where the team was received as guests of honour and received various gifts as a token of people’s appreciation. Because of this, the

⁴² Because of the mounting security concerns in Afghanistan, a planning meeting was held in Oslo in mid-August with representatives from NORAD, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kabul, the NAC and NCA (see Knudsen 2004b).

field visits could more adequately be described as field excursions rather than field-based research as such. Moreover, the time did not allow any in-depth study of individual projects apart from some short meetings with beneficiaries and community members and their representatives. In more formal gatherings (*shuras*) and occasions (dinners and formal receptions), the participants expressed strong support of the NGO and its project activities, but again, the format allowed a more comprehensive review neither of the projects nor of their potential impact.

(* Norad was only represented on the field visit to the Badakshan province (Ivar Evensmo). Due to mounting security concerns in Faizabad (Badakshan) and death threats to Afghan females accompanying foreign NGOs, Sadiqa Basiri did not take part in the Badakshan field trip but remained in Kabul.

Appendix 4: Tables

Table 1: NAC budget, 2000-2004 (in NOK)

| Income Norw. donors | 2000 | | 2001 | | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| | Result | Application | Result | Applied for | Result | Applied for | Result | Applied for | Result | |
| NORAD | 783 782 | 10 236 069 | 6 272 000 | 10 236 069 | 8 042 000 | 13 788 000 | 8 342 000 | 12 997 302 | 7 000 000 | |
| GAP | | 9 700 000 | | 9 700 000 | 4 850 000 | - | 4 850 000 | 8 715 580 | 7 977 079 | |
| UD emergency relief | 5 912 062 | 3 319 000 | 12 851 000 | 3 319 000 | 2 819 000 | - | - | | | |
| OD-96 | 3 152 345 | - | - | - | - | - | 100 000 | - | - | |
| FOKUS (NORAD) | 1 428 723 | 2 732 722 | 1 862 113 | 2 732 722 | 1 812 276 | 2 500 253 | 1 549 702 | 1 577 556 | 1 121 850 | |
| Total | 11 276 912 | 25 987 791 | 20 985 113 | 25 987 791 | 17 523 276 | 16 288 253 | 14 841 702 | 23 290 438 | 16 098 929 | |

Andre og egne midler

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Other donors (project) | 1 784 353 | 1 326 991 | 858 967 | 862 597 | 4 755 268 |
| Total own contribution (projects) | 209 972 | 253 089 | 822 275 | 233 348 | 821 316 |
| Total admin. costs | 642 033 | 561 078 | 892 380 | 1 268 656 | 1 225 312 |

| | 2000 | | 2001 | | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Appl. for | Result | Appl. for | Result | Appl. for | Result | Appl. for | Result | App. for | Result |
| NORAD Frame (80%og 90%) | 1 868 000 | 1 868 000 | 2 188 000 | 2 188 000 | 10 896 000 | 9 749 700 | 10 970 000 | 10 477 574 | 9 369 000 | 10 233 000 |
| <i>Own contribution, NORAD Frame (20%/10%)</i> | <i>467 000</i> | <i>467 000</i> | <i>547 000</i> | <i>547 000</i> | <i>1 136 000</i> | | <i>1 097 000</i> | | | |
| NORAD Other | 2 000 000 | 744 000 | | | | | | | | |
| NORAD GAP | | | 4 740 000 | 7 097 000 | 12 000 000 | 12 000 000 | 39 696 000 | 2 550 000 | 10 000 000 | 8 600 000 |
| <i>Own contribution, NORAD other</i> | <i>186 000</i> | | <i>284 000</i> | | | | | | | |
| SUM NORAD | 4 521 000 | 3 079 000 | 7 759 000 | 9 832 000 | 24 032 000 | 21 749 700 | 51 763 000 | 13 027 574 | 19 369 000 | 18 833 000 |
| MFA (UD) | 15 085 000 | 12 850 000 | 38 860 405 | 33 786 540 | 11 102 000 | 11 102 000 | 15 295 500 | 10 545 000 | 8 500 000 | 4 498 500 |
| <i>Own contribution to MFA</i> | <i>754 000</i> | | | | | | | | | |

Non-NORAD/MFA funding

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| NCA Non Earmarked | | | | | | | | | 1 100 000 | 2 922 000 |
| NCA Lenten HIV/AIDS | | | | | | | | | 100 000 | 100 000 |
| NCA Lenten Water | | | | | | | | | 2 250 000 | 2 250 000 |
| TV Campaign HIV/AIDS | | | | | | | | | 200 000 | 480 000 |
| NCA Own | | 754 000 | | 550 000 | | 1 708 800 | | | | |
| NCA operational | | | | | | 3 766 751 | | | | |
| ACT ASAF 01 | 5 614 212 | 1 122 104 | | | | | | | | |
| ACT ASAF 02 (excl. MFA) | 18 311 058 | 2 333 384 | | 452 432 | | | | | | |
| ACT Appel ASAF 11 (excl. MFA) | | | 22 555 044 | 8 526 568 | | | | | | |
| ACT ASAF 21 | | | | | 50 415 477 | 6 848 588 | | | | |
| ACT ASAF 31 | | | | | | | 18 543 242 | 3 241 013 | | |
| UNHCR | | | | | | 982 715 | | 65 546 | | |
| Donations in kind | | | | 426 525 | | 3 229 006 | | 2 110 877 | | |
| Local income | | | | 145 381 | | 353 338 | | 433 959 | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 44 285 270 | 20 138 488 | 69 174 449 | 53 719 446 | 85 549 477 | 49 740 898 | 85 601 742 | 29 423 969 | 31 519 000 | 29 083 500 |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|

Table 3: NCA – overview of gap funds, 2002-04 (in NOK)

| | Budgeted/ application | Result |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------|
| GAP 2002 | | |
| 11016 Rehabilitation 10 schools - Kabul | 11 111 111 | 11 111 111 |
| Administration | 888 889 | 888 889 |
| TOTAL GAP Afghanistan 2002 | 12 000 000 | 12 000 000 |
| GAP 2003 | | |
| 11 100 - MRRD Institutional Capacity Building | 8 000 000 | |
| 11 105 - Water Conflict Prevention | 1 500 000 | |
| 11 106 - Urban Water Supply/Kabul Polytechnics | 10 000 000 | |
| 11 107 - Coordination and Professional Support of Water Programme | 2 400 000 | |
| 11 108 - School Rehabilitation in rural areas | 8 000 000 | 1 250 000 |
| 11 142 - Women, Water and Health | 1 000 000 | 500 000 |
| 11 151 - Psycho Social Assistance | 796 000 | 800 000 |
| 11 264 - Reh. of Rural Water Supply, Irrigation and Potable Water | 5 000 000 | |
| 11 327 - Water Resources, Monitoring and Management | 3 000 000 | |
| TOTAL GAP Afghanistan 2003 | 39 696 000 | 2 550 000 |
| GAP2004 | | |
| 11 100 – MRRD Institutional Capacity Building | 1 000 000 | |
| 11 142 - Women, Water and Health | 250 000 | 250 000 |
| 11 151 - Psycho Social Assistance | 600 000 | 600 000 |
| 11 264 – Rehab. of Rural Water Supply, Irrigation and Potable Water | 3 000 000 | 3 000 000 |
| 11 715 - Training of Traditional Birth Attendants | 400 000 | 400 000 |
| 11 716 - Rehabilitation of Health Institutions | 800 000 | 800 000 |
| 11 717 - Literacy and Peace Building | 400 000 | 400 000 |
| 11 718 - Skills Training for Income Generating and Marketing. | 1 000 000 | 1 000 000 |
| 11 719 - Development of Educational Sector, Reconstruction of Schools | 1 200 000 | 1 200 000 |
| 11 720 - Agriculture Development and Food Security | 950 000 | 950 000 |
| 11 961 - Provincial Government Capacity Building | 400 000 | |
| Administration | 800 000 | |
| TOTAL GAP Afghanistan 2004 | 10 800 000 | 8 600 000 |

Table 4: NAC – overview of gap funds, 2002-03

**FINANCIAL REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN 2002 AND 2003
NORAD GAP PROJECTS**

ALL FIGURES ARE IN NOK

Exchange rate NOK 1 =

8,09

| | PROJECTS | AMOUNT APPROVED | AMOUNT SPENT IN 2002 | AMOUNT SPENT IN 2003 | TOTAL PROJECT COST | REMAINING FUNDS FROM 2003 | AMOUNT NEEDED TO COMPLETE 2003 PROJECTS | NET VARIANCES |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Codes | Badakhshan Program | | | | | | | |
| 5.1.1 | Community water supply | 1 129 000 | - | 740 802 | 740 802 | 388 198 | - | 388 198 |
| 5.1.2 | Irrigation water supply | 2 174 000 | 78 922 | 1 218 761 | 1 297 683 | 876 317 | 645 439 | 230 878 |
| 5.1.3 | Path bridge | 748 000 | - | 549 976 | 549 976 | 198 024 | - | 198 024 |
| 5.1.4 | Retaining walls | 962 000 | - | 696 726 | 696 726 | 265 274 | - | 265 274 |
| 5.1.5 | Road rehabilitation | 498 000 | - | 119 787 | 119 787 | 378 213 | - | 378 213 |
| 5.1.6 | Orphanage | 522 000 | 227 051 | 235 082 | 462 133 | 59 867 | - | 59 867 |
| | Sub total | 6 033 000 | 305 973 | 3 561 135 | 3 867 108 | 2 165 892 | 645 439 | 1 520 454 |
| | Ghazni/Kabul Program | | | | | | | |
| 5.2.1 | Ghazni / Merai hospital | 363 000 | - | 239 833 | 239 833 | 123 167 | - | 123 167 |
| 5.2.2 | Ghazni city water & sanitation | 165 000 | - | 165 284 | 165 284 | - 284 | 24 601 | (24 885) |
| 5.2.3 | Robat community water supply | 198 000 | - | 174 494 | 174 494 | 23 506 | - | 23 506 |
| 5.2.4 | Nooristan dental clinic construction | 742 000 | - | 518 002 | 518 002 | 223 998 | 295 473 | (71 475) |
| 5.2.5 | Noorgal clinic construction | 742 000 | - | 668 991 | 668 991 | 73 009 | - | 73 009 |
| 5.2.6 | Chardiwal MCH / Zakori clinic | 742 000 | - | 632 712 | 632 712 | 109 288 | 112 026 | (2 738) |
| 5.2.7 | Sub total | 2 952 000 | - | 2 399 316 | 2 399 316 | 552 684 | 432 100 | 120 583 |
| | TOTAL | 8 985 000 | 305 973 | 5 960 451 | 6 266 424 | 2 718 576 | 1 077 539 | 1 641 037 |

Table 5: NCA – main development partners

| Partner Name | Abbrevia- tion | Thematic Priority Areas | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|-------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|-----------|
| | | HIV/ AIDS | Water | Violence/ Conflict | Org. Dev. | Food Security | Educa tion | Emergency |
| Afghan Development Association | ADA | | X | | | X | X | X |
| Agency for Rehabilitation & Energy-conservation in Afghanistan | AREA | | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Afghan Tuberculosis Association | ATA | X | | | X | | | |
| Afghan Women Skill Development Centre | AWSDC | | | X | X | X | X | |
| Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee | CAWC | | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Co-ordination of Afghan Relief | CoAR | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| Co-operation Centre for Afghanistan | CCA | | | X | | X | X | X |
| Ghazni Rural Support Program | GRSP | | X | | X | X | | X |
| Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan | RRAA | | X | | X | X | | X |
| Sanayee Development Foundation | SDF | | | X | X | | X | X |
| Women Assistance Association | WAA | | | | X | X | X | X |

Source: NCA 2002 (Afghanistan Country Programme 2003-04)

Table 6: NAC – main development partners

| Abbreviation | Partner name |
|--------------|--|
| ARC | Afghan Relief Committee |
| AYF | Afghan Youth Foundation |
| HAFO | Helping Afghan Farmers Organisation |
| IHS | Institute of Health Science, Nangarhar |
| IMF | Medical Faculty, Nangarhar |
| MoH | Ministry of Health (Prof. Dr General Sohailah Sidiq) |
| PMoE | Head of Provincial Education Department, Ghazni |
| PMoH | Provincial Directorate of Health of Nangarhar |
| School | Bi Bi Aishah Girls High School, Peshawar |
| School | Astri Morken (Bi Bi Khajika) Girls Middle School, Peshawar |
| UMCA | United Medical Centre for Afghans |

SUMMARY

Afghanistan has within the span of three years moved from a complex political emergency to a nascent state-building process, a process that is not yet completed. The Afghanistan case is therefore important for learning how foreign aid and foreign NGOs can best assist a fledgling government in promoting peace and rebuilding the country. The report reviews the policies, programmes and projects of two Norwegian NGOs in Afghanistan, the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), during the difficult transitional period 2000–2004.

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