AFGHANISTAN: A CASE STUDY
STRENGTHENING PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITIES

AFGHANISTAN: A CASE STUDY
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ACRONYMS

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ALP	Afghan Local Police Initiative
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
ANDMA	Afghan National Disaster Management Authority
ANSO	Afghan NGO Safety Office
AOG	Armed Opposition Groups
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAD	Donor Assistance Database
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Military Forces
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NHRP	NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RC	Resident Coordinator
UN	United Nations
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Strengthening Principled Humanitarian Response Capacities:
AFGHANISTAN CASE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of the study

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is undertaking a study on strengthening principled humanitarian response capacities with research input from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Donors and humanitarian actors have committed themselves to providing humanitarian aid in accordance with the following principles, which are enshrined in the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles and the *Code of Conduct* for the International *Red Cross* and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief[1]:

- **Humanity:** saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found. This is also referred to as the humanitarian imperative or the right to offer and receive assistance.
- **Neutrality:** the provision of humanitarian assistance without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature.
- **Impartiality:** the provision of humanitarian assistance without discrimination among recipients and guided solely by needs, with priority given to the most urgent cases of distress.
- **Independence:** the provision of humanitarian assistance based on policies formulated and implemented independently from parties involved in the conflict or parties that have a stake in the outcome. According to the Code of Conduct, humanitarian actors will endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

This study seeks to examine the challenges to adhering to these principles in practice and how donor funding restrictions can hamper the ability to provide principled hu-

manitarian assistance. The case study in Afghanistan is the second of four case studies (Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan and South Sudan are the other three).

1.2 Methodology

An initial analysis of the humanitarian context, trends in donor conditionality and the implications for NGO practice was undertaken prior to the field visit which included a review and analysis of relevant literature and documentation regarding humanitarian priorities, donor presence and practices in the selected field locations.

The field visit was conducted between 17-28 November 2011 during which the team conducted interviews in Kabul, Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif with donors, UN agencies, members of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, private contractors, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) members, and international and national NGOs. The principal aims of the research are as follows:

- Analyse the current status of humanitarian funding in terms of donor adherence to commitments under GHD and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. It will focus on conditions (be they positive or negative) placed on partners' programme implementation and assess the implications of these on their ability to adhere to the principles of humanitarian action.
- Assess current practices within the humanitarian community with regards to accepting/refusing funding and their adherence to principled humanitarian action more broadly.
- Develop guidance based on lessons learned and best practices in the provision and acceptance of humanitarian funding.

Much of the research was conducted in closed meetings although there were two group discussions with national and international NGOs in both Jalalabad and Mazar-i-

Sharif. A feedback workshop was held with agencies which had participated in the research at the end of the trip.

1.3 Limitations

The number and diversity of aid providers in Afghanistan and the geographical extent of assistance operations meant that some stakeholder groups were less well represented although efforts were taken to assess and fill gaps in knowledge as the research progressed. Efforts were made to talk directly with traditional donors (who provide by far the greatest percentage of humanitarian funding) with some measure of success, but it was more difficult to access (and to track the humanitarian financing of) non-traditional donors. While a meeting was held with a representative of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) in Kabul, the timing of the visit coincided with the meeting of the Loya Jirga making it difficult to consult more widely with the government.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Political context

Years of active conflict have resulted in a fragile Afghan governance structure, particularly at the provincial and district level and despite some progress the Government continues to struggle to deliver basic public services, implement the rule of law and guarantee internal security with large parts of the country effectively ruled from provincial capitals.

Since 2010 the international political context in Afghanistan has been dominated by the process of 'transition' which was first set out at the London Conference in January of that year. At this time, the focus was on supporting the Afghan Government to achieve ownership of security through a planned phased withdrawal of international military as the security environment improved. By May 2010, at the Kabul Conference, the transition objectives had developed further to include the additional pillars of governance and development, with a conditions-based approach outlined for full transfer of authority to the Afghan government by the end of 2014.

With increasing domestic pressure on foreign governments to reduce the level of their military support to the country, plans for transition have progressed quickly over the last 12-months. With the second phase of the handover of cities and provinces having taken place in November, and with plans for the evolution and scale-down of the size and scope of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) mandated to 'improve security, extend the reach of the Afghan government, and facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces'[2]

there is now a far greater acknowledgement of the potential changes in the political, security and development context in the years to come.

2.2 Development context

There have been some tangible improvements in governance and development as a result of the massive increase in aid; access to education has improved, with eight million children attending school in 2011,[3] a figure unmatched in Afghanistan's history; child immunisation has increased considerably, and 85 per cent of all Afghans now have access to some form of healthcare.

However, these development gains need to be put in the context of the huge needs which remain; Afghanistan has the second highest under-5 mortality rate in the world, has one of the highest maternal mortality rates[4] and, at 45 years for men and 44 years for women, Afghanistan remains the only country in the world where women have lower life expectancy than men.[5] An estimated 88 per cent of adult women and 61 per cent of adult men are illiterate.[6] The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Afghanistan the second most corrupt country in the world[7] and in the 2010 Global Peace Index, Afghanistan is ranked third from bottom. In mid-2011, OCHA estimated 4.1 million people to be food-insecure[8] and in need of relief support, with a further one million in need of emergency agricultural assistance. Only 27 per cent of Afghans have access to safe water sources, the lowest share in the world, and 63 per cent have no access to improved sanitation facilities.[9]

2.3 Security context

Conflict between the Afghan National Army (ANA) supported by international military forces (IMF) against armed opposition groups (AOG) has escalated over the last year with insurgent attacks having increased by up to 50 per cent between June 2010 and 2011.[10] The analysis of many agencies interviewed including the Afghan NGO Security Office (ANSO) is that the increase in AOG attacks accompanied the IMF troop surge which started at the end of 2009, and is indicative of the rejection of the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan.

The situation has certainly become more deadly for civilians, with UN estimates suggesting that in the first six months of 2011, Afghan casualty figures were at their highest level since 2001[11] with civilians being caught between the two opposing sides and at risk of being targeted by both. NGO staff continues to be injured in the conflict for a variety of reasons and often as a result of being caught in crossfire. The first six months of 2011 showed a significant increase in the number of serious incidents against NGO staff, with increases in the number of abductions, IED strikes and shootings.[12] Despite this there is still a general view held by NGO staff and supported by ANSO that attacks on humanitarian agencies are not the official policy of organized

AOGs, rather they are as a result of criminality, mistaken identity or as a result of decisions taken locally.

Interviews with humanitarian staff left little doubt that the inability to achieve internal security has played a significant part in the failure to achieve sustainable provision of basic services despite the injection of billions of dollars of assistance.

2.4 Resource flows

A total of $62.1 billion of aid[13] has been pledged to Afghanistan by international donors since 2002[14] and of this $57 billion had been disbursed by July 2011.[15] Efforts to build sustainable institutions and lay the foundation for the long-term development of the country have been undermined by the channelling of an estimated 77 per cent (up to mid-2009) of this assistance bilaterally to projects with little or no involvement with the government.[16] While bilateral funding isn't problematic in and of itself, of concern is that funding has often been poorly coordinated and accounted for and that too little effort has been made by donor agencies to support Afghan development priorities. Some donors have justified the omission by pointing to the low absorption capacity of the Afghan state, the overly centralized authority and fiscal decision-making and by the high levels of corruption that exist. However, with

transition has come a greater acknowledgement of the need for donors to address this issue and there has been a renewed commitment to align bilateral funding with priorities outlined in the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS).[17]

Humanitarian aid and development assistance

Box 1 shows that as a proportion of official development assistance, there has been a year-on-year decline in humanitarian assistance from a peak in 2001 when it accounted for the majority of total aid to Afghanistan prior to Operation Enduring Freedom. Since 2002, official development assistance has increased dramatically and has also increased in proportion to the amount of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan; in 2009 the amount of development assistance was over 12 times that of humanitarian aid.

NGOs, UN agencies and members of the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement are estimated to have collectively received $1.8 billion or 30.5 per cent of the total aid dispersed by DAC donors in 2009. The amount received by international NGOs increasing by over $450 million dollars between 2008 and 2009, almost doubling in size.[19] Over the same time period, the amount received directly by Afghan NGOs also doubled although was significantly less, amounting to $28.1 million.[20]

BOX 1: **HUMANITARIAN AID AND OTHER OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, 2000-2009[18]**

Total official humanitarian aid   Other ODA

| | US$ billion |
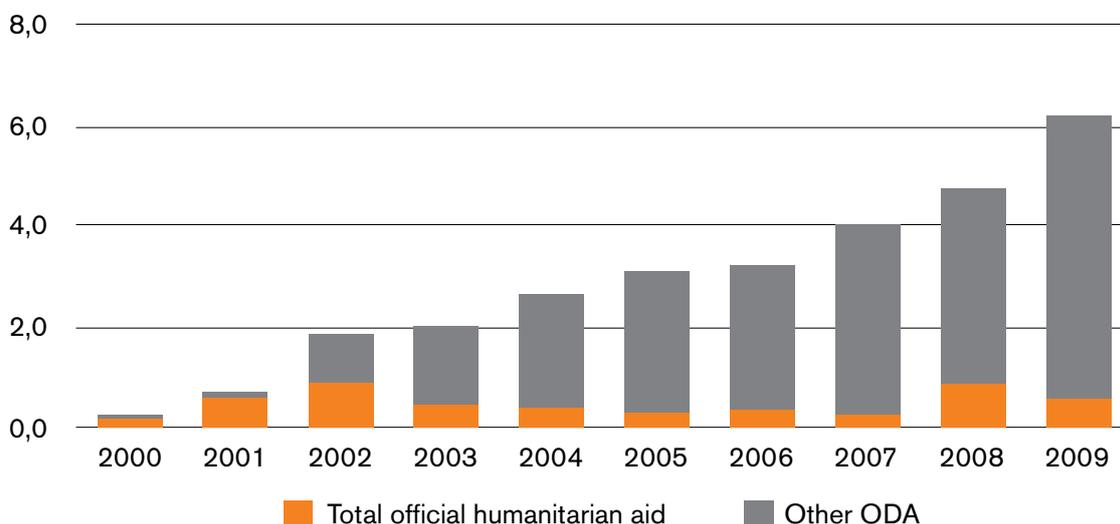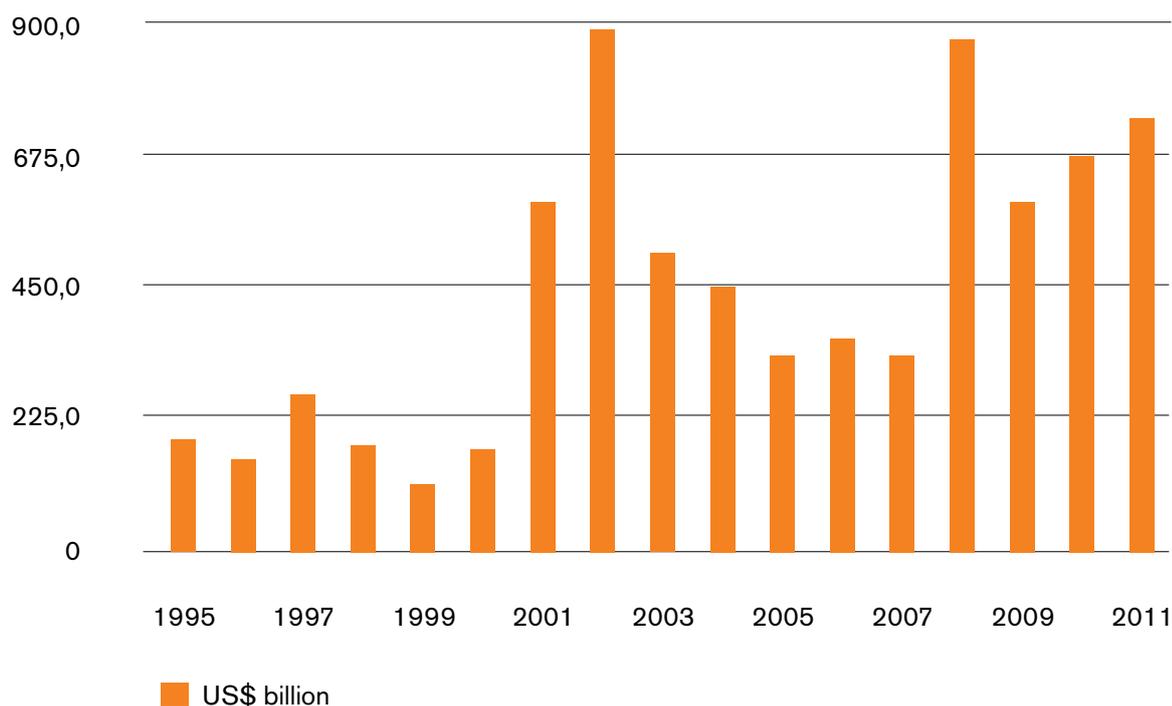
When viewed in isolation, trends in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan highlight considerable increases in 2001 to $594 million which was over 3 times the amount received the previous year (see box 2). There was a peak of $890million in 2002, shortly after the invasion, followed by a decline until 2008 when food shortages and considerable insecurity led to a considerable increase in the humanitarian needs of the population. Data from the OCHA Financial Tracking Service show that, by the end of November 2011, a total of $736 million of bilateral and appeal money had been raised to meet humanitarian needs.[22]

Afghanistan has been the subject of a Consolidated Appeal only five times between 2000 and 2012 (the 2012 CAP was launched in December) and there is a perception from many humanitarian organisations that donors have deprioritized humanitarian needs against other forms of assistance including development, reconstruction and stabilization.

However, Afghanistan has been one of the largest recipients of CERF funds, receiving $71.2million between 2006 and 2010. In 2010 it received $11million from the CERF underfunded allocation which was considered by many to be a response to improvements in humanitarian coordination.[23] An Emergency Response Fund (ERF) was established towards the end of 2009 with contributions which amounted to $6.3million. In 2011 the ERF attracted $6.22million with a considerable surge being registered towards the end of the year as OCHA put its energies into re-launching the fund as a means of meeting the urgent humanitarian needs of drought-affected communities.

Foreign military expenditure

Dwarfing the aid figure are resource flows for foreign military expenditure which between 2002 and 2009 were $242.9 billion.[24] In 2009 alone, the foreign military presence is estimated to have cost $63.1 billion, ten times the total international aid investment in the same year.[25] Key elements of this are the costs for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and US Operation Enduring Freedom. Within this there are several funds which are of note:

• Within the NATO-managed ANA Trust Fund is a relatively small post-operations emergency relief fund which in October 2009 had disbursed $2.36 million of a total of $3.5million. The basic guiding principle for the use of this fund is to remain '*as civilian as possible, as military as necessary'* and it is guided toward those people directly affected by a military operation.[26]

• A significant securitized contribution to relief and development is delivered by PRTs which the Afghanistan government estimates have received $2 billion in funding between their inception in 2002 and the end of 2009[27] although there is no agreement on this figure. The Afghanistan Development Assistance Database (DAD) shows a figure of $517.7million although this figure is likely to be grossly under-reported.[28] Between 2002 and 2009 the DAD

captured less than $1billion channelled via foreign military actors yet the real amount may be as much as 15 times this figure.[29]

- There is also a congressionally-appropriated fund for military commanders to use to win 'hearts and minds,' called the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP). According to the US Army handbook, the objectives of CERP are to '*…enable local military commanders in Afghanistan to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their respective areas of responsibility by executing programs that immediately support the indigenous population. The program is restricted to certain project categories such as water and sanitation, electricity, healthcare, and education. The intent of the program is for projects to achieve "focused effects" with an emphasis to meet urgent humanitarian needs and providing maximum employment opportunities for the Afghan people.*'[30]

The significant proportion of funding to Afghanistan which is channelled through stabilization teams and IMF is unprecedented and indicative of a 'coherent' or 'all-of-government' approach *'that does not separate traditional foreign policy from development policy and from security policy.*'[31]

Government support to emergency and development assistance

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) leads on the provision of development assistance and the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) is the Afghan government's flagship programme for community development and is also the government's largest development programme.

There is a basket of programmes which forms the basis for Afghanistan's support to communities in need of humanitarian assistance. The livelihood-based food security surveillance system, located within the MRRD's Vulnerability Analysis Unit, is responsible for providing timely data collection and designing effective food security policies and programmes; the Reintegration Unit aims to support the needs of returning refugees and IDPs and to promote their social and economic reintegration; and the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) is the main coordination body for disaster management at the national level and has recently revised the Disaster Management Act which is under consideration in Parliament. In February 2010 the National Disaster Risk Reduction Platform was launched and there are Provincial Disaster Management Committees established throughout the country. Despite the organisational architecture having been developed, the authorities suffer from a lack of human capital and physical resources and as a consequence, implementation of programmes is primarily through NGOs and UN agencies.

3. THE HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT IN AFGHANISTAN

1.1 Vulnerable groups

Political instability, insecurity and human suffering caused by the long history of conflict are frequently compounded by recurrent natural hazards in Afghanistan, such as droughts, floods and earthquakes, which increase vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs. Taken together, the cumulative impact of decades of natural disasters, armed conflict and lack of quality development has left a legacy of precarious human development and humanitarian indicators which reveal the true scale of humanitarian need that remains in Afghanistan. The 2012 Consolidated Appeal requests $437million to meet the needs of the following target groups:

- 600,000 conflict-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- 70,000 natural disaster-affected IDPs
- 3,000,000 natural disaster-affected general population (2.8 million affected by drought)
- 22,000 projected cross-border IDPs
- 5.4 million conflict-affected people (with no access to basic services)
- 162,000 projected refugee returnees

Drought

At the time the research was conducted (November 2011) there was considerable concern throughout the humanitarian community about drought across a large swathe of the country. In August 2011 a large-scale food security assessment was conducted which identified drought-related needs in 14 provinces as a consequence of which the CAP was re-drafted to take account of additional humanitarian needs amounting to $142 million.[32] Operational response to these needs has been complicated by difficulties in distinguishing between those in need of humanitarian assistance and those who are coping but who are chronically poor and highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

Refugee & returnees

In terms of vulnerability, there is a large caseload of Afghan returnees from Pakistan and Iran who have moved as a result of the modest pull factors from their country of origin and push factors from their country of asylum. Since 2002, over 5.6 million Afghan refugees have returned home. The UNHCR community-based snapshot survey of September 2011 indicates that 40 per cent of the returnees have not reintegrated at all and security concerns have prompted secondary displacement of nearly 20 per cent of the returnees. Given that 5.6 million returnees reflect nearly a quarter of Afghanistan's population, the situation is of grave concern both in terms of humanitarian and security concerns.

Most returnees rely to a great extent on their family and other networks for their social and economic reintegration but many of the poorer families and individuals require assistance, particularly with regard to shelter and water. Although some returnees have access to land, it is not always sufficient to support their needs leading to secondary displacement in search of secure livelihoods. Land tenure and property rights also remain problematic with returnees often finding their land has been occupied during their absence. Many of those that remain outside the country have no land and would be far harder to reintegrate were they to return. Looking to the future, there are particular concerns about the estimated 1.4 million unregistered refugees or economic migrants in Iran who have been issued with exit permits as part of a process to formalize their presence in the country which will require that they first return to Afghanistan. Any rapid repatriation would place significant stress on an already fragile population.[33]

It is also estimated that 1 million Afghan refugees remain in Iran and over 2 million in Pakistan, with growing pressures on these caseloads to return to Afghanistan by the end of 2012 as per the terms of the Tripartite agreement. These Afghan refugees pose markedly difficult reintegration challenges as compared to the previous return caseloads owing to their protracted refugee status (over 50 per cent were born in exile) and tenuous links to places of origin, as well as limited absorption capacity in Afghanistan.

Conflict-affected IDPs

The escalating conflict between International Military Forces (IMF) and the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the panoply of Armed Opposition Groups (AOG) has made a significant contribution to humanitarian needs as civilian populations are displaced from areas of active conflict and counter-insurgency operations. Because many remain in areas of conflict humanitarian actors often struggle to have access to these people.

The increasingly intense conflict has caused a 51 per cent increase in displacement during the first 10 months of 2011 as compared to the same period in 2010.[34] These figures only provide a partial picture of the current displacement levels given the limited access of humanitarian actors, including UNHCR as well as national authorities, to many conflict-affected areas.

Similarly difficult to access are Pakistani populations who have been forced to flee across the border into Afghanistan as a result of military operations by the Pakistani Army. As a result of the gross insecurity in the border areas, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is yet to access these people and hence they are yet to have their status determined and so exist as '*cross-border displaced*'.

3.2 A blurred aid architecture

In Afghanistan humanitarian agencies with a commitment to humanitarian principles have often struggled to adequately distinguish themselves from other actors including the military and private contractors who have also been involved in the provision of emergency assistance but who don't share the same values and principles. This has resulted in misperceptions by parts of the population and has undermined the currency of humanitarianism in Afghanistan.

The NGOs and the Red Cross Movement

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have delivered humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan in support of Afghan refugees since 1979. By November 2003 more than 1600 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of Planning. The majority of the NGOs are Afghan, but the largest programmes are implemented by international NGOs. Most NGOs are involved in provision of emergency relief and in running of health, education and agricultural programmes although there are a growing number that have involved themselves in peace building, human rights and advocacy work, including a large number of multi-mandate organisations who balance some or all of these components with their development and relief activities. In addition to the NGOs the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and the Afghan Red Crescent have a long history of involvement in protection activities and the delivery of humanitarian response; the Red Cross/Crescent is one of the few humanitarian organisations that can legitimately claim to work across much of the country.

The United Nations

UNAMA was established in 2002 and is the special UN political mission mandated '*to support the Government in its efforts to improve critical areas, including security, governance and economic development, and regional cooperation.*'[35] One of its main functions is to coordinate the humanitarian and development activities of UN agencies to promote aid effectiveness and good development practice. Up to 32 UN programmes and agencies have been active in the country, some dating back over 60 years (UNDP first arrived in Afghanistan in 1950).

Amongst the UN agencies are several with a humanitarian mandate, some of whom have a commitment to humanitarian principles and many of whom have had a long history of working in Afghanistan. From the perspective of principles, the key challenge for the UN is how to deliver principled humanitarian assistance and undertake impartial humanitarian action on the ground while at the same time being the government's main interlocutor on reconstruction and development.

ISAF, IMF and stabilization operations

ISAF's mission in Afghanistan is to '*reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity*

and capability of the ANA and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.[36] Through its PRTs, ISAF supports reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, securing areas in which reconstruction work is conducted by other national and international actors. Its mandate also includes support to 'humanitarian assistance' efforts conducted by Afghan government organisations, international organisations and NGOs. At the end of October 2011 NATO estimated that there were 130,638 foreign troops in Afghanistan from 49 countries.[37]

Funding for stabilization operations has dwarfed humanitarian assistance but has also had an important impact on it due to (i) the tendency for stabilization objectives to overlap with humanitarian ones in some places and (ii) as a result of the use of military and private contractors to implement and/or support humanitarian programmes. While the level of 'humanitarian' assistance conducted through PRT and CERP-funded mechanisms has been relatively limited,[38] these play an important role in shaping perceptions of the IMF and international assistance more broadly. A large part of the problem has been that programmes have often had short-term objectives and have been tainted by their association with military or security objectives which are often not valued by communities or are rejected due to fears about retaliation by AOGs.[39] There is also a widespread concern that stabilization operations constitute a serious threat to NGO operations due to the difficulty in distinguishing between the politicised and militarized assistance they provide and the principled assistance humanitarian agencies strive to deliver.

The relationship between UNAMA and ISAF is complicated since both are mandated by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and have complementary mandates, yet coordination has at times been difficult.[40] With regards to humanitarian issues, poor coordination led to sustained lobbying efforts by NGOs requesting an independent UNOCHA, whose coordination role had been folded into UNAMA.

3.3 Difficulties in defining humanitarian needs
Whose needs count?
Interviews with humanitarian organisations revealed the complexity of distinguishing between humanitarian needs and those that have arisen due to the long-term development deficit in the country. Many NGO participants expressed the view that humanitarian issues often get side-lined or glossed over in Afghanistan in order to give greater space for positive stories. At the time the research was conducted, there was a perception that the drought was being prioritized by donors and the UN over broader concerns that many NGOs had about conflict-affected IDPs. With transition underway, conflict is an issue that was felt to directly challenge the more optimistic views of the political and security situation which have received far greater cover-

age than the challenges attached to humanitarian action which are considered unwelcome, particularly by troop-contributing countries. While NGO press releases reveal the concern that many felt about the slow pace with which donors have responded to the drought, interviews revealed a greater concern about the growing number of conflict-related IDPs. A common sentiment expressed by humanitarian staff was that UNAMA and troop-contributing countries were choosing to ignore this caseload as it challenged more optimistic messages about stability in Afghanistan although a counter-argument about the lack of access humanitarian organisations have to this caseload could equally be applied.

The lack of access and implications for principled donorship
Humanitarian staff recognized that they had also played a part in failing to highlight the deteriorating humanitarian situation as a result of the limited access they had in areas of greatest need. Assessment of needs and delivery of assistance requires unhindered access and there are large parts of the country to which some or all humanitarian actors have no access. Even more problematic is the fact that, because of different approaches to negotiating access and a lack of transparency about agency movements, there is no agreement on the proportion of the country which agencies can reach without the use of military assistance. Access is itself dynamic and is dependent on the movements of the complex array of AOGs and criminal elements which includes a wide diversity of actors ranging from ideological, political and criminal armed groups with varying command structures, modus operandi and positions towards the aid community at local, regional, national and international levels.

Organisations also felt that the lack of reliable data confounded efforts to lobby donors for funding and recognized that in some areas they are failing to obtain quality, evidenced-based, and reliable primary data. This lack of information impacts on coordination efforts and means that there are significant gaps in coverage across the country. Insecurity across large parts of Afghanistan has been instrumental in restricting aid distributions to 'hubs' in district capitals, rather than at community level which has exacerbated tensions between communities and has politicised the delivery of aid as local power brokers have sought to secure aid provision – there were numerous examples provided during interviews of local power holders trying to take credit for the provision of assistance in areas under their influence. The insecurity has also led to a culture of 'remote control' management systems for programmes in the most insecure areas which has limited interaction with beneficiaries and has made it difficult to monitor the quality of humanitarian assistance provided.

The flaws inherent in aggregating data
Difficulties in access as a result of insecurity are not

helped by the inadequacy of mapping efforts. There was agreement between staff from the UN (including OCHA), NGOs and donor agencies that one of the most significant problems facing humanitarian agencies' efforts to communicate needs and coordinate their activities was the lack of accurate data. For example, maps showing where agencies were operational tended to be aggregated at the provincial level rather than at a more localized level which gave a far more optimistic picture of agency coverage than was really the case. In the same way, some security incident maps were also considered misleading as the incidents they depicted were in areas to which humanitarian agencies have access, ignoring the significant parts of the country where there is no access, and as a result no incidents. This risked masking the extent of the access problem. In insecure areas where interviews with operational agencies highlighted the difficulties of moving from one village to the next it is now urgent that agencies are more transparent about the access they have and that this is captured in a way that highlight parts of the country where there is no access. The task of addressing this gap in knowledge is currently a priority for OCHA.

3.4 Funding humanitarian needs
A lack of bilateral funds – but a lack of information?
There was general criticism from multi-mandate agencies that there is insufficient funding to meet humanitarian needs, however, the lack of evidence and the conflation of humanitarian and development needs makes it extremely difficult to prove this. More humanitarian-focused organisations tended to be more confident in their current funding situation, although many said that should access allow them to expand their humanitarian programmes into new areas, then additional funds would need to be provided. Donors tended to counter assertions of lack of funds by pointing to the lack of access that agencies had to those most in need and the lack of rigour in assessment methodologies. Some challenged the mechanism of remote programming (and by extension, remote assessment) that many international NGOs and UN agencies adopt in areas of insecurity (see also section 4.2). Several donors spoke of the struggle they faced in trying to spend their humanitarian budgets and talked of contingencies that they had adopted rather than under-spending against their budgets. Interestingly the few agencies that had a reputation for delivering principled assistance tended to have fewer concerns about funding shortfalls and generally had adequate funds for their work. Members of this group tended to be the agencies that donors would come to if they had humanitarian funding which they weren't able to use elsewhere.

A complex Consolidated Appeals Process
While relief and development agencies believe that the breadth of need requires concerted and coordinated action, this has not been provided in practice, partly due to problems of accessing those in need, but also as a result of difficulties in reaching a common definition of humanitarian needs which can galvanise a coordinated response. This has been reflected in a historic failure to articulate humanitarian needs clearly in the CAP; for 2008 there was no CAP despite significant humanitarian needs; for 2009 and 2010 a Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) was launched which was criticized by some for being too 'developmental'; in 2011 efforts were made by HCT to address this by including in the CAP a strategic objective which responded to humanitarian needs as a result of chronic vulnerability. The 2012 CAP, launched after the conclusion of field research, reflects a commitment to trying to get back to basics by *'delineat[ing] a boundary between needs that require immediate response to save lives or prevent irrevocable harm, and needs as a result of structural underdevelopment.'*[41]

Despite the Afghanistan CAP being one of the better-funded globally,[42] many NGOs perceived it as a UN fundraising tool and highlighted the significant challenges they had in accessing funding compared to the projects put forward by the UN which have tended to attract more funding. There is also an acknowledgement that it is constrained by the limited access that the mainstream humanitarian community has to large parts of the country which makes it difficult to speak of the CAP as representative of the needs across Afghanistan as a whole. Some spoke of the CAP as being *'narrative heavy'* which they considered indicative of the fact that many of the actual needs have not been assessed and hence are unknown. NGOs also felt that donors are increasingly asking them to 'register' their projects under the CAP even in instances where bilateral funding for the projects has been agreed upon, which they thought tended to 'inflate' the success of the CAP as a coordinated planning tool.

Pooled funds
The two pooled funds that are used for humanitarian response are the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Emergency Response Fund (ERF). While the research focused only limited attention on the former which had allocated $416m to Afghanistan by the end of November 2011,[43] good practice in allocating CERF funds to both UN agencies and NGOs in under-funded sectors has been documented by the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (NHRP) and is highlighted in box 3 next page.

While an ERF has existed in Afghanistan since February 2010 and in the same year funded 18 emergency projects (94 per cent for natural disaster and 6 per cent for conflict),[44] interviews suggested that it had fallen into abeyance. At the time of the research the ERF was being re-launched with the establishment of an Advisory Board to oversee the strategic use of the fund and in the space of a relatively short time had attracted significant funding from donors keen to fund drought activities. As of 27 November 2011, the Afghanistan ERF had secured contributions from Ireland, Norway and Sweden which in addition to funds carried over gave a total amount of $6.22 million of which $2.36 million has already been allocated, the majority for response to natural disasters.[45] As the ERF re-establishes itself, it will be important to develop in-country systems to ensure there is a transparent triage process to determine the most urgent humanitarian needs and to address the perceived gap in funding conflict-related humanitarian response. There is also an important opportunity for a well-funded ERF to make a significant contribution to humanitarian coordination if OCHA chooses to set benchmarks that prioritise under-reported humanitarian needs or use the fund to engage in more focused support to national NGOs who often have access to some of the areas that are hardest to reach due to their stronger links with communities, but also due to their greater willingness to work in insecure areas. A well-managed and well-funded ERF also has the potential to strengthen principled humanitarian assistance in part because decision-making about its use is most often taken through a consultative process which includes members of the humanitarian community.[46]

4. HUMANITARIAN FINANCING AND PRINCIPLED DONORSHIP

4.1 Donor coordination and humanitarian strategy

Despite the existence of a humanitarian donor coordination group which met most months and is primarily coordinated by the ECHO representative, there wasn't a sense from most of the donors who provide humanitarian funding that they had a set of strategic priorities for their humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Given the recent revision of the 2011 CAP to highlight drought-related needs, many donors considered this a priority although not all donors had funds available. In some cases, strategic decision-making for fund prioritization and disbursement was made at headquarters. Most donors said that they relied on their humanitarian partners to highlight needs through their own assessments or were guided by appeals such as the CAP.

There was only one donor interviewed who outlined a comprehensive country-based process for making funding decisions which was based on (i) a set of thematic priorities which identified target vulnerable groups and sectors, (ii) a geographic analysis of need, and (iii) the geographic spread of partner programmes. This information was used as the basis for determining how funding was allocated. The same donor raised concern at the paucity of information that existed about where agencies had access and the lack of detail about where agencies were working.

This attempt at an internal process of country-level strategic prioritization of funds appeared to be the exception rather than the norm and the general lack of donor strategies for humanitarian engagement in Afghanistan was often raised by humanitarian actors as a concern. Given that many donors spoke of their reliance on their partners for informing their humanitarian funding decisions which is broadly in line with the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship, the importance attached by humanitarian agency staff to a strategy document is evidence of the very limited trust that exists between donors and beneficiary agencies, the commonly-held perception being that humanitarian needs are often subordinated to political or military priorities. The time it has taken for drought assistance to attract funding was considered to be evidence of the lack of a shared donor analysis but likely also reflects the limitations that humanitarian agencies have faced in conducting needs assessments due to insecurity and lack of access.

4.2 Donor perspectives on humanitarian principles

One of the concerns most often raised by humanitarian organisations was a perception that humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan had been de-prioritized by donors.

Many pointed to the lack of dedicated humanitarian donor agency staff as being indicative of this with responsibilities for different funding pools often being handled by a single person who was often based outside of the country which, given the importance of contextual knowledge and a clear separation between different funding streams, was considered to be problematic. While this might be the case, compared to many other countries, donors are well-represented and while there may be few dedicated humanitarian staff (only a third of the donors visited had a dedicated humanitarian staff member), the fact that twelve donor representatives participated in the research suggests that in-country representation may not be the problem.

Donor staff all spoke of the complexity of the situation; several humanitarian donors from troop-contributing countries acknowledged the conditions placed on their development and stabilization assistance and most spoke of the efforts that had been taken to separate humanitarian funding from development cooperation and stabilization funding streams. In only one case had humanitarian funding been moved from a multilateral channel to a bilateral, country-level programme although this was thought to be a temporary measure and significant effort had been made by the dedicated humanitarian donor representative to separate humanitarian funds from other funding streams.

'Our humanitarian funds are separate and ring-fenced. There are no sectoral conditions and so we are able to allocate funding based on need and have responded to appeals and agency needs assessments. We choose our partners based on their absorption and delivery capacity and their reliability. We're conscious that many agencies work in "pockets" and don't have national reach' donor staff member

Some donors considered that their humanitarian funding was comparatively small although there was a general feeling that they were able to make informed decisions about what to fund based on the information provided to them by their partners rather than being steered by political considerations.

While many donor staff had some understanding of humanitarian principles and the implications of these for humanitarian operations and access, only three had heard of the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Initiative, the principles it articulates and the good practices it outlines. All of the donors visited were members of the GHD. While this gap in knowledge is disappointing, it is difficult in practice to determine its impact; those who had knowledge of the GHD tended to be better informed about the initiative and were more fluent in their articulation of humanitarian principles but the limited timeframe of the research makes it impossible to comment on the extent to which this influenced their funding decisions in practice.

Principles and pragmatism

Interviews with NGOs highlighted a level of frustration about the slow donor response to the drought,[47] and concern about the difficulties in raising funds for conflict-affected IDPs which was perceived to be a political decision which compromised the independence of humanitarian agencies. This sentiment is echoed in the 2010 Humanitarian Response Index (DARA, 2010).

'Afghanistan is the only complex emergency in which all major OECD/DAC donors (with the exception of Switzerland and Ireland) are also belligerents who have shaped their aid support on the assumption that Afghanistan is a post-conflict country. Donors are, for the most part, unwilling or politically unable to recognise the humanitarian scope of the crisis.'[48]

However, donors raised a counter-concern about the limited NGO access to areas in most need and generally held the view that there was limited absorption capacity within the humanitarian sector saying that on the one hand NGOs spoke about the need for far greater aid while on the other many agencies had very limited access to the areas that most required assistance, which some felt compromised their impartiality. This is another area where diametrically opposed views between donors and humanitarian agencies is impossible to reconcile with both having some truth to them.

The lack of access was considered problematic in terms of being able to provide accurate assessment data which some donors used as a justification for not funding some NGOs. Given the difficulties that have been experienced in remote programming, and the widespread problem of corruption, it was felt that NGOs weren't able to provide adequate oversight of partners' implementation of programmes. While this position could find support in the 'good practice' section of GHD, NGOs argued that they had robust mechanisms to ensure compliance and that this was overly paternalistic. They considered the rejection of remote programming compromised their ability to provide much-needed assistance in insecure areas.

Access was also considered an impediment to the donors' own ability to monitor the outputs and effectiveness of projects. Most donors were extremely constrained in their movements, having to rely on traveling in hard-skinned vehicles in military convoys in order to move beyond provincial capitals. Given this restriction, it came as no surprise that physical monitoring by donors themselves is very limited.

'We are signed up to the GHD initiative but we don't have mechanisms in place to monitor implementation. It comes down to staff doing their best to abide by the guiding principles' donor staff member

Some donors did speak of sub-contracting the task of programme monitoring to third party research organisations which have greater freedom to travel. While this may provide basic information about progress, interviews with two humanitarian organisations highlighted that they had received requests for payments in return for good monitoring outcomes. Even when agency programmes were monitored none of the donor agencies interviewed had established means to monitor adherence against principles. In such a complex context, the focus of attention was very much on achieving the basics.

'It is possible to measure the adherence of our partners to humanitarian principles but this is not done in practice and so it's left to one's instinct and feelings which can be very subjective' donor staff member

4.3 Donor conditions on humanitarian funding
Sectoral priorities
Some donors placed sectoral conditions on their funds as a result of restrictions on budget lines which had been made available to Afghanistan. One European donor was restricted in its humanitarian assistance to food aid which it justified as being in line with the strategy of the EU Council. Given the extensive lobbying by humanitarian agencies about the drought and the perception that donors had been reticent to provide funds, the donor representative didn't consider this to be a problem and felt that the prioritization was highly appropriate under the circumstances. The same donor spoke about the strong links it had with NGOs and the cash-based responses it had funded through these humanitarian organisations.

Donor policies on counter-terrorism
Counter-terrorism conditions were raised by several agencies, particularly those who were using or considering using funds from USAID. With a growing number of donor agencies now including provisions that *'criminalise the transfer of resources to perceived terrorist groups or individuals, irrespective of the humanitarian character of such actions or the absence of any intention to support terrorist acts'*[49] a number of NGOs spoke of the challenge this presented to humanitarian principles. NGOs who had accepted these funds talked of the limitations it placed on them in terms of entering into humanitarian negotiation with proscribed groups which included the Afghan Taliban. While the implications of doing so remain unclear, there was fear about the threat of legal action against the organisation. Because of the potential for non-adherence in Afghanistan to have consequences for the organisations global operations, it was felt that the risk of contravention represented too great a threat to ignore.

One of the organisations implicated considered this to have considerably compromised their ability to make impartial decisions about where they worked although acknowledged that they had still taken the decision to accept

funding. A second organisation was more pragmatic and conceded that the decision to take the funds had ruled out the possibility of humanitarian negotiations and they had to work around the operational consequences. To this end, they were in the process of adopting a strategy of positioning themselves in contested areas in order to give the organisation links to communities and profile with AOGs which they hoped would provide them a degree of acceptance and access. Several other NGOs had a policy of not accepting USAID funds and although this was motivated by the perceived political nature of the funding source rather than as a result of counter-terrorism clauses, it meant they avoided this particular dilemma in relation to US funds.

One local staff member who worked for an international NGO spoke candidly about the impossible task the organisation faced if it did try to meet counter-terrorism conditions which prohibited the provision of assistance to the Afghan Taliban. As a medical organisation working in the east of the country, it was both impossible and unethical to distinguish between different patients who used the basic health unit the organisation supported. He had grave concerns about the implications of applying such conditions on the organisation's impartiality, independence and political neutrality.

Instrumentalization of humanitarian assistance for military purposes
There are examples of PRTs seeking to instrumentalize humanitarian aid for military purposes; in 2008, one donor asked NGOs to support 'post-battlefield clean-up' operations, essentially requesting that NGOs work with communities in the aftermath of a battle and operate alongside PRT officials and to agree to project visibility with the US public.[50] While the funding stream wasn't earmarked as humanitarian and the request wasn't purely directed towards NGOs, that some agencies chose to accept the funds and the conditions attached suggests a critical lack of commitment to, or understanding of, humanitarian principles and also exemplifies the complexities of delineating humanitarian from development assistance. Donors have also linked funding to the provision of information to their troops; one donor established a new funding line of 10 million euros which was open only to those NGOs willing to implement projects in Northern Afghanistan where its troops were based. The funding offer was further linked to an agreement to exchange information with the army.[51] Both these examples are historical and while they represent either a dangerous misunderstanding in the relationship between the military and humanitarian actors or attempts to instrumentalize humanitarian assistance, there is some optimism that recent progress in civil-military coordination may help to ensure that there is now greater separation. Feedback from agencies which participated in the research tended to suggest that there was a greater degree of separation and coexistence be-

tween the PRTs and IMF on the one hand and humanitarian agencies on the other which made these sorts of examples less likely to occur.

Project visibility requirements

Interviews highlighted a continuing need for dialogue between donors and humanitarian agencies on issues of visibility. While this is considered to be an important means by some donors to showcase progress made in Afghanistan, it also risks undermining the independence and political neutrality of NGOs and has implications for staff security and the safety of those who receive the goods, particularly in contested areas. For example, OCHA reported that local community members in Marja following the IMF operation in Spring 2010 refused to accept food in USAID-branded packages due to fear of retaliatory actions by AOGs – though were willing to accept the food once it was rebranded into neutral packages.

Many agencies had a policy of requesting waivers from donor requirements for branding and marking. One agency gave an example of such a request approved by OFDA for a shelter programme in a particularly insecure province where it had fears that USAID logos would not only risk compromising agency staff security but also had implications for the security of beneficiaries of the project.

Politicizing NGO relief and development work through communications

Several examples were given of donors publicizing NGO activities alongside perceived PRT 'successes' and politicizing humanitarian assistance by conflating military action with humanitarian response. The website of one donor made reference to an NGO project it had funded alongside stories about the work of its PRT and military troops which was considered by the NGO to potentially threaten the independence of the organisation (when this issue was raised it was immediately addressed). Rather than being viewed as an attack on the ability of a humanitarian actor to adhere to principles this was considered indicative of the lack of donor awareness about humanitarian principles and was easily resolved once it had been raised. Of more concern was a December 2007 NATO web update which reported that, '*Humanitarian assistance operations are helping both the people of Afghanistan and coalition forces fight the global war on terror.*'[52] Humanitarian (and development) successes can play an important role in changing perceptions of foreign aid in Afghanistan as well as helping to justify costly military intervention to tax payers back home. However, such perceptions can be dangerous for organisations providing assistance who may be wrongly accused of being linked to IMF.

4.4 Donor conditions on development and stabilization assistance

Because humanitarian assistance does not exist in a vacuum but is delivered alongside development assistance and in some areas also in close proximity to stabilization assistance, it is impossible to speak about it in isolation from other funding streams which tend to be more politicised and subject to greater conditions. Some donors acknowledged that stabilization funds were also used to meet humanitarian needs albeit through established (and most often militarized) PRT teams. On several occasions humanitarian and development donor staff spoke of their role in educating the military and PRT staff on issues of humanitarian principles and lobbying for these needs to be passed on to humanitarian agencies to resolve.

While development assistance isn't guided by the same set of humanitarian principles, in the context of Afghanistan many agencies who deliver humanitarian assistance are also involved in long-term development activities and many of these considered issues of impartiality and independence to be good practice and sought to apply them more generally in their work; this was particularly true of the multi-mandate organisations which sought to balance the sometimes conflicting agendas of providing humanitarian aid, development assistance and advocacy in a highly politicised context. This theme is most comprehensively dealt with in the joint NGO paper 'Being Smart about Development in Afghanistan' which identifies four principles including that of 'impartiality' which is defined as follows;

'Smart development in Afghanistan is independent of stabilization efforts and impartial, providing assistance based on genuine need to all populations. It translates development dollars into assistance that is accepted and makes a meaningful difference to the lives of Afghans'[53]

Stabilization assistance is primarily delivered through military actors or private contractors but plays an important role in influencing general perceptions about humanitarian assistance. In some cases, humanitarian actors have accepted PRT funds but there have also been concerns that stabilization funds have been used by PRTs for humanitarian assistance both of which have fuelled misperceptions.Conditions placed on these forms of assistance which were discussed during the research included the following examples.

Geographic funding conditions

Many donors tie their development assistance to the area of deployment of their respective troops. While there are potential win-wins due to significant development deficits in some of these areas, troops and PRTs have been deployed to respond to insecurity rather than under-development and there are concerns that areas of stability which don't receive the same level of funding are penalized as a consequence. On this issue it is noteworthy that some donors are beginning to address this and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID[54]) is guardedly positive about AusAID, reporting the following:

In 2009-10 AusAID estimates that around 10 per cent of the AusAID country program was spent in Uruzgan Province. Following the Dutch withdrawal from the Uruzgan PRT, this proportion is expected to increase to between 14 and 20 per cent of the AusAID country program in 2010-11. This suggests that, unlike some donors, the Australian aid portfolio is not significantly weighted towards Australia's military presence. While the proportion is expected to increase, it is unlikely that it will represent a majority of the aid portfolio in Afghanistan. This is encouraging and suggests that AusAID has a more balanced approach than a number of other donors to supporting comprehensive aid programming across Afghanistan.[55]

Several of the multi-mandate organisations and many of the Afghan agencies who participated in the research had accepted development assistance funding with geographic limitations although interviews highlighted that the larger agencies fared better in negotiating more favourable or 'principled' terms. As a result some of the larger international NGOs have managed to avoid some of the geographic conditions that were imposed on others. The smaller (often national) organisations tended to be more likely to accept these conditions and work in prescribed areas, including areas affected by considerable insecurity and some had paid a terrible price in terms of attacks on their staff as a result.

Liaison with the PRT

A number of development cooperation advisors have been 'embedded' in PRTs in the provincial capitals and security restrictions placed on their travel means that there is often a requirement for NGOs receiving development funds to meet with donor staff in PRT compounds which are highly militarized. In order to maintain their independence most NGOs seek to maintain a distinction between themselves and IMF and have a policy of not visiting PRTs with the exception of such donor coordination visits despite the fact this undermines such strategies.

The imposition of sectoral and implementation conditions

Significant development and stabilization funds are channelled via for-profit contractors who design programmes and sub-contract out implementation to a range of organisations, particularly Afghan NGOs. Interviews highlighted a desire amongst many of these national, multi-mandate agencies to accept this money despite the potential negative impact on perceptions and their limited capacity to work in such insecure areas.

Staff from organisations which had accepted these funds raised concerns about the inappropriateness of the methodologies used by donors to design programmes which were developed with little or no consultation. While many NGOs were willing to take substantial amounts of funding which was often available only for projects in the most

insecure areas, they were concerned about flaws in project design and the political nature of the funding which had significant security implications, and which placed organisations at significant risk. That many of these organisations also delivered humanitarian programmes suggests that for some, funding is a far higher priority than maintaining their principles. The international NGO-authored White Paper on Smart Development in Afghanistan highlights the importance of principled programming even in the context of development assistance:

'NGOs work to ensure that programs are impartial and are perceived as such. In Afghanistan the six NGOs who have authored this paper do not travel with armed security or military actors and avoid areas where military actors are present, to ensure their roles are not confused. NGOs communicate to communities the aims of their programs and their separation from the conflict. NGOs often work with religious leaders, as respected community leaders, to gain support for program activities and to better communicate with community members. This ensures that they understand NGO impartiality and that they are not being asked to 'take sides.' In insecure areas, when communities recognize that programs are based on their needs and priorities, and are not part of the conflict, they are willing to participate. They are able to provide the security required for NGO staff and resources, negotiating with conflict actors for their participation, as well as being willing to participate fully in programs and ensure the transparent use of resources. In turn AOGs recognize that NGOs are not part of the military effort and allow communities to work with them. This has been demonstrated in Logar Province where AOGs have ordered communities not to work with PRTs but many have continued to allow communities to participate in the National Solidarity Program.'[56]

In the context of Afghanistan, principled development assistance makes good sense; one organisation which was delivering development assistance using geographically-tied development funding had suffered attacks and abductions of its staff by AOGs. Discussion with communities in the area had revealed that there was a perception that the funding was linked to the local IMF presence which was the reason for the attack. The organisation was under a lot of pressure from the contractor who oversaw the funding to spend the money despite the gross insecurity.

Interviews highlighted a divide between aid agencies that had maintained a principled stance in accepting funds and those that were perceived to have been co-opted by the lure of large multi-million dollar budgets to accept assistance linked either to PRTs or donors with a military presence in the country. While many of these conditions and practices (although not all) are applied to stabilization and development funding, given the difficulties of distinguishing between different programmes, different donors

and different agencies, the fact that the same agencies often provide humanitarian and development assistance (and are often under pressure to engage in emergency response in the areas where they are present) means there is a real threat that agencies that seek to adhere to their principles are judged the same as those that don't.

The issue of differentiation is further complicated by the lack of honesty amongst agencies about which funds they have accepted and there is a sense that some organisations feel that they have compromised their values as well as their principles in some of the funding that they have agreed to take. In such a complex environment where organisations who have signed up to the same set of principles have taken very different decisions about which funds to accept and which principles to compromise (be it their impartiality by accepting geographically-tied aid, or their independence by accepting PRT funding), the shroud of secrecy is particularly unhelpful and has served to fragment the relief and development community. As a result, coordination mechanisms are generally considered to be weak in Afghanistan.

4.5 Humanitarian principles and government funding streams

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was created by the Government of Afghanistan to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects. It has received quite broad support from international and national NGOs and UN agencies, a growing number of whom are implementing partners of the community-driven development programmes. As a government-led development programme, the NSP is in line with political and development objectives, however, its roots in communities has resonance with NGOs' own bottom-up approach and also resonates with acceptance strategies. As a result, a growing number of multi-mandate NGOs have begun partnering with the government to deliver NSP programmes in their areas of operation.

Several agencies spoke about the NSP programme and there were a range of different approaches adopted. One agency which undertakes both humanitarian and development activities considered it an obvious source of funds. A second multi-mandate organisation talked of it as presenting a dilemma to them – while they were keen to support national development strategies, and considered the NSP relatively well-managed, they were also cognizant of the challenge it potentially presented to them in upholding their humanitarian principles and broader perceptions, particularly in contested areas. As a consequence they were guarded in their public communications about the programme. The multi-mandate agencies which accepted NSP funds justified it on the basis of the perceived impartiality of the project design process which draws heavily on community participation. They also spoke

of the urgency of tackling the rampant chronic poverty across the country as a means to addressing vulnerability and building resilience. While this provides a compelling justification for supporting the NSP it also highlights the challenge implicit for multi-mandate organisations working in Afghanistan. The position of a third agency is that it will seek to coordinate its activities with the government but will not use government-managed funding streams.

From a security perspective it is noteworthy that many of the AOGs reject the IMF far more strongly than they do the Afghan government and from a community acceptance perspective, the IMF draw far greater criticism than the Afghan government and hence government funding was felt by many of those interviewed to carry less risk of AOG opposition and greater likelihood of broad community acceptance than foreign donor funds.

4.6 NGOs and donor funds

The research found that agency approaches to fundraising fall into four broad categories:

- Those who consider that the donor community in Afghanistan is highly politicised and reject all bi/multilateral funds in order to avoid diluting its humanitarian programming;
- Those who have internal 'red lines' about funding and seek to avoid donors who they consider to have politicised their assistance (particularly donors from troop-contributing countries);
- Those who accept all funding apart from USAID who are considered the most political;
- Those who take all funding that is offered and either use acceptance with communities and/or security strategies to deliver programmes.

BOX 4: EXAMPLES OF AGENCY STRATEGIES ON ACCEPTING DONOR FUNDS AND NEGOTIATING CONDITIONS

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'Donors are increasingly pigeon-holing crises. They want to respond to 'acute shocks' but how can you separate these out? Donor strategies have de-linked assistance at a time when holistic responses are required' *International multi-mandate NGO*

'We have a global policy of not taking US funding and at the moment we don't take DFID money in Afghanistan as it's tied to their military intervention in Helmand – they are improving but we feel that the military agenda is still pre-eminent in their decision-making. We prefer Nordic funds and use SIDA and CIDA funding in the country. We also use our own unrestricted income' *International multi-mandate NGO*

'Our back donor isn't present in Afghanistan and hasn't contributed troops. We don't seek US funding although we do take funds from US private donors and philanthropists. We would take DFID funding as we feel it's more principled but we haven't had the opportunity. One of our international partners took funding from the German PRT in the North but got hit hard and had to withdraw' International multi-mandate NGO

'We have decided to take NSP which doesn't sit comfortably with our principles but we use the funding in an area which isn't contested and have integrated the programme into our overall programme. We feel that the community aspect is very strong' International multi-mandate NGO

'We primarily use Norwegian funds and won't take US funding as there's a stigma attached. We haven't had conditions imposed on our funds although one donor stipulated which villages we were to prioritise – I think it was because of the need to cooperate with local politicians. After doing an assessment we challenged this and changed the list although we kept some of the prescribed villages towards the top of the list' International solidarity NGO

'We have a policy of not working through PRTs as we are concerned about the need to visit the compound for liaison purposes. As there's no physical PRT in Kabul we have used PRT funds as we can deal directly with the donor' International multi-mandate NGO

'We have a policy of not accepting humanitarian funding from donors with troops in the country – although we have broken this policy on a couple of occasions. We don't however take humanitarian funds from US, Germany or DFID and will under no circumstances accept PRT funding.' International humanitarian NGO

While most agencies had a policy on which funds to accept there wasn't a coordinated interagency position. NGO coordinating agencies felt that the diversity of the humanitarian community made it too complex to agree specific 'red lines,' and although the ACBAR code of conduct does make reference to humanitarian principles, it is non-binding. Some agencies weren't supportive of coordinated positions on humanitarian principles due to concerns about the inability of peer humanitarian organisations to adhere to these and the consequent risks to their reputation. Agency staff justified this position on the basis that many humanitarian agencies' fundraising was more principled in theory than it was in practice with funding portfolios often contrary to agency policy. A strict interpretation of humanitarian principles was considered by some agencies to be attainable only by financially independent agencies that could 'afford' to be principled.

There was the greatest consensus on the use of USAID funds which were considered amongst the most politicised. The donor was also the one most often associated with the large group of for-profit contractors who were considered to be the least principled providers of assistance. That these groups have suffered most attacks was considered an indicator of AOG perceptions of the funding source a position endorsed by a recent ANSO report; *'neutrality and local acceptance, not the military or counter-insurgency, have become the dominant factors of security for NGOs in the vast areas of the country now dominated or controlled by the Taliban and other armed opposition groups'*.[57] The report went on to say that most of the 59 NGO staff abducted by AOGs in 2009 were released unharmed after their neutrality and local acceptance was verified.

There are also several well-established humanitarian organisations who have taken USAID funds and who have been criticized by their peers as a consequence (albeit privately). This was one of the most divisive issues within the humanitarian NGO community and there was a concern that irrespective of what approach an agency adopted, the humanitarian community risked being judged on the basis of its weakest member.

5. HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS & ADHERENCE TO PRINCIPLES

5.1 Humanitarian principles in Afghanistan
Single-mandate and multi-mandate agencies
While the situation in Afghanistan of chronic under-development punctuated by periods of humanitarian need has provided a role for both of these types of organisation, the heavily politicised context has complicated the process of balancing the different aspects of agency mandates. Despite the breadth of humanitarian need in Afghanistan, the link between community acceptance and operational security has limited the movement of all organisations.

Many single-mandate humanitarian organisations which would usually engage in areas for a limited period of time and then withdraw or move to an area of greater need have had to establish a longer-term presence in order to build acceptance in communities which allows them to have access to those in greatest need. Consequently operations have taken on a greater degree of permanence than they would have done in other contexts and has meant that these agencies aren't as nimble as they are in other countries. The humanitarian organisations considered to be most principled and often with the best access have either positioned themselves in the most insecure areas where there is high-demand for their assistance, or have sought to reach a critical mass of operations across

the country in order to promote acceptance and enable them to have access to areas of humanitarian need.

While agencies with a strict humanitarian mandate have at times struggled to separate immediate needs from longer-term ones, it has been easier for them to make the distinction than it has for multi-mandate agencies. These organisations conflate development and humanitarian activities and during interviews often rejected a distinction between the two as 'unhelpful'. As such their approach has been to address both humanitarian and development needs and by doing this seek to address underlying vulnerability and build resilience to future shocks. Many of these agencies have a long experience of working with communities and use this as a springboard for addressing humanitarian 'spikes' such as the current drought. Despite the conflation of humanitarian and development activities, agencies still sought to apply a principled approach as a response to the politicized context in Afghanistan, arguing that irrespective of whether they were addressing long- or short-term needs, the nature of the conflict and the breadth of needs which traversed political and military boundaries, required that agencies took as principled a stance as they possibly could.

The multi-mandate agencies were also most outspoken about what they considered to be 'pigeon-holing' of needs by donor agencies. Several organisations spoke of donor policies separating out humanitarian from development as being problematic due to the short donor timeframes which did little to build resilience in communities and which often provided what was considered to be unhelpful or inappropriate assistance. However, these same agencies were also concerned about the conditions which were often placed on development funding, and as a consequence had agreed internal 'red lines' on what donors to accept such funding from. This presented a dilemma in terms of having access to adequate funding which matched their approach and was considered untainted by politics. Many of the multi-mandate agencies spoke of the importance of their own unrestricted funding sources to deliver programmes which they felt were appropriate to the context. Private funds permitted these organisations to work in areas which they considered to have the greatest development needs and to address the most urgent sectoral issues upholding their impartiality. Private funds were also considered essential for making up for humanitarian funding shortfalls particularly for those agencies that chose not to accept funding from donors they considered the most politicized in order to maintain their independence and neutrality.

Agency interpretation of humanitarian principles
Interviews revealed a wide diversity in the understanding and practice of principled humanitarianism and highlighted considerably different thresholds for putting pragmatism before principles. While the divisive funding environment has made a significant contribution to this, the diversity of organisations delivering humanitarian assistance (and providing other aid) in Afghanistan has also played a part. Humanitarian principles are not an end in themselves but a means of securing access and meeting humanitarian needs and this raises an important question as to whether the lack of access in Afghanistan indicates a failure of principles, a failure of agencies to apply them correctly, or whether it's completely unrelated to principles.

While a strict interpretation of humanitarian principles may be considered the ideal in terms of negotiating access, once again the picture in Afghanistan is blurred; impartiality was the principle most often referred to during interviews and most agencies spoke of the importance of objectively establishing and prioritizing needs and most described mechanisms to achieve this albeit in the areas where they had access. While few agencies used the word 'independence' and 'neutrality,' most described the importance of maintaining a distance from PRTs and IMF and had strategies to reinforce local perceptions of neutrality – by being selective about which funds to accept, by having 'red lines' about donor branding and other conditions, or by having a strategy of communicating agency values. Folded into the definitions of humanitarian principles were issues of 'do no harm', the importance of linking relief, rehabilitation and development, and beneficiary accountability.

When organisations were asked to provide a definition of principled funding there was a broadly unanimous response: funding that was provided in response to organisations' own needs assessments and which was free from donor conditions. The convergence of views is very likely linked to the frequency with which agencies have discussed the issue of funding and have had to justify their selection or rejection of different funding streams. Where this challenges agencies the most is in areas where they don't have access and hence are unable to conduct their own assessments.

'The problem with the humanitarian community is that we work to the lowest common denominator which makes it hard to act on humanitarian principles. We have tried to establish coordinated agency positions in the past but this has failed.' International multi-mandate NGO

'We want to have proposals that target the areas in most need. Efficiency is also an important principle for us and we'd like to see a link between humanitarian need and longer-term support.'
Donor agency definition of humanitarian principles

'Humanitarian assistance should be impartial and neutral and it should aim to work with people who most need aid. This is the basis for access to beneficiaries.'
Afghan staff member of international multi-mandate NGO

'We strive to be and to appear to be independent, impartial and neutral actors whether the conflict is two neighbours, two villages, two commanders or the Government and AOG. We do not implement any Government or IMF projects (we do not receive direct funding from the Government or PRT) – but we coordinate with the Government on a variety of levels (and receive funding from foreign government aid agencies). Decisions are made by us, based on development and humanitarian need and opportunity. We do try though, specifically with development programming to balance between areas as to not support one group more than another - nor give that impression.'
International multi-mandate NGO

5.2 Using principles to negotiate access

Rather than a strict interpretation and communication of principles and agency values as a means of promoting access, many organisations spoke of an access strategy; one that placed greatest attention on building trust through needs-based and quality aid delivery, building confidence amongst community members that in some circumstances could transcend political affiliations and ensure protection from AOGs and support of elected governors. Some agencies combined this with a passive approach to humanitarian principles which contextualized and operationalized some, but not always all, of the principles. Interviews with agencies revealed four broad access strategies which had been adopted:

- **Go principled:** Access is based on a strict observance of humanitarian principles which are communicated to communities and parties to the conflict. A high visibility strategy is adopted which provides a level of security and protection. Agency staff members are fluent in the principles and formal dialogue is held with parties to the conflict. Respect by all parties of the principles is the basis for access. Only when there is a rejection of principles or where

there is a high degree of criminality does access become problematic;

- **Go hybrid:** Access is based on a partial or passive observance of humanitarian principles and communication of agency values at a local level. This is supported by an acceptance strategy built on good quality work and strong links with the community which provides a level of protection from potential threats. Negotiation with AOGs may occur at local and district level. This may be accompanied by agency visibility but this is not always the case. This may allow restricted movement outside project areas;

- **Go local:** The agency may or may not have an understanding of humanitarian principles but greatest efforts are invested in building strong community-level links which may be buttressed by contextualized communication about humanitarian principles. There are often minimal links to AOGs with confidence derived in large part from community acceptance. This strategy makes it very difficult to quickly move beyond existing areas of operation for humanitarian purposes;

- **Go military:** Agency derives security from military support and in so doing rejects principles. Access to areas is entirely dependent on having sufficient force to move. The obvious dangers are the threat of attracting insecurity and transferring this to people to whom assistance is provided. These agencies have tended to have the greatest number of security-related incidents.

BOX 6: **EXAMPLES OF AGENCY ACCESS STRATEGIES**

'An NGO has been working with rural communities in Helmand province since 1988. The NGO relies on experienced local staff, proven community-led engagement methods, a community acceptance, low-profile approach to security, and well-established relationships with community leadership structures and partners to implement programs. Despite the ongoing conflict in Helmand, from 2007 – 2010, the NGO implemented a multicomponent agricultural livelihoods program in three districts of the province. Working with communities to provide targeted trainings to improve agriculture practices and rehabilitate community and agriculture-related infrastructure, the program increased production, sales and income of Helmand farmers. Communities agreed to participate and contribute to program activities, as well as guarantee the safety and security of NGO staff and project sites because the NGO is respected and viewed as an impartial actor which sup-

ports need-driven activities. Communities regularly advised NGO staff of changing security conditions and when travel to communities or project sites was not advised. When AOGs stopped project activities and threatened NGO staff, community representatives negotiated with the AOGs to allow project activities to continue and NGO staff safe access to project sites. AOGs acknowledged the NGO-community partnership and that the NGO worked for the benefit and under the protection of the community.' *International NGO*

In a province in the eastern region where government control is contested, NGOs are responsible for 90 per cent of the health services. While regular negotiations are held with the local shura as part of an access strategy, and the organisation has adopted a low profile strategy, traveling on local transport in local dress, it has still been targeted by AOGs who have abducted staff and taken humanitarian goods. While the community has been successful in negotiating on the agency's behalf, with the province under the control of numerous different AOGs (both international and national), there has been very little space for or understanding of humanitarian principles. In this context, 'healthcare has been the negotiating tactic, not principles.' *International multi-mandate NGO*

'We have funds for Nyangahar and Kandahar but the security situation is dicey and so we have few bids from NGOs or contractors. They all have different methodologies but most pay for protection and bribes. We judge success on whether they get the job done. So long as we have evidence – even a photograph if we or our consultants can't access the area – then we will pay the fees.' *Private Contractor*

'We communicate our agency's vision and mission to communities that we work with. We also try to include them in monitoring and feedback to strengthen accountability. We don't have a strategy of negotiating access with AOGs but instead we negotiate with communities who act on our behalf.' *International multi-mandate NGO*

'When we had local staff kidnapped the first question that was asked by the captors was about our funding portfolio. AOGs do tend to follow communities wishes and we don't believe that NGOs are specifically targeted. Most AOGs are quite astute and know what's going on.' *International NGO*

'We've challenged ourselves about whether we're working in the areas with greatest need or due to historical inertia. Because of the humanitarian imperative we're willing to push out and we're aiming to establish a response capacity in 15-16 Provinces. We did a study and found that we're well known due to our historic work in the country but this has a shelf-life.' *International multi-mandate NGO*

'As an organization, we are defined by what we do in communities. Although this holds true everywhere we work, it's particularly important in a complex environment like Afghanistan where there are numerous armed actors. Our access is a product of not only the communities' own acceptance, but also the wider perception of us and potentially the communities' ability/desire to advocate on our behalf. Therefore, adherence to the humanitarian principles as well as to principles of transparency/accountability, and high quality standards are essential to our access.' *International multi-mandate NGO*

In reality the four strategies above tend to blur into each other. From a humanitarian access perspective the first two strategies provide the greatest opportunity to access people in areas of need and provide assistance that is accepted and free from negative repercussions. Where all but the first of these approaches proved problematic was when the agency wanted to move beyond its traditional boundaries into surrounding areas as acceptance and security was felt to be extremely localized. Several agencies provided examples of the complexities of expanding their coverage to surrounding areas which for some had resulted in security incidents. Some agencies talked of a contradiction between their humanitarian values in theory and practice with the exception of a major humanitarian crisis to which they would be compelled to respond. This also represented a significant compromise of organisations' ability to provide impartial assistance.

'We make decisions about where to launch humanitarian response based on where we have access, not on where the greatest needs are.' international multi-mandate NGO staff member

Only one organisation interviewed by the research team felt it had the capacity, profile and links to work across the majority of the country. Even this organisation was unable to travel in the most insecure areas where the security situation was too dynamic, where there was too little regard for humanitarian principles or where there was significant criminality.

Humanitarian agencies have played a role in adding to the confusion. While diversity in the humanitarian sector has always been considered a strength and has historically been successful in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the most complex and politicised of environments (as it continues to do so in many parts of Afghanistan today), the different interpretations of principles and the different access strategies that have been adopted do carry significant risks not least of all to NGOs themselves who are disjointed in their approach. While strengthened UN coordination and a better analysis of needs may improve this, some agencies considered there

would be much to be gained in better articulating a common position – accepting that there will always be outliers who will go their own way. The advantages of a more formal position as Afghanistan goes through transition is that a group of agencies with a commitment to impartial, independent and non-political assistance may be better placed to occupy the anticipated post-transition vacuum and maintain access to contested areas. Given the strong linkages with communities that many agencies have, a re-focusing of efforts on communicating values could strengthen humanitarian currency more broadly. Despite the potential benefits of such a strategy, as discussed earlier in this report, the level of trust and honesty that will be required to broker such collaboration remains elusive.

5.3 Adhering to principles when working through implementing partners

In areas considered too insecure for international NGOs to access, implementation was sub-contracted to Afghan NGOs. Many of these partnerships have been established for many years and were considered by most international NGOs to be an effective means of overcoming some of the access limitations. There was not universal agreement on this and some agencies were less convinced, pointing to the challenges of effectively managing partners in areas of such considerable insecurity where corruption was so pervasive. Donors were generally less convinced of the strength of remote programming and many were also unconvinced of the effectiveness of remote needs assessments or monitoring. The position of one donor was that it would not fund agency drought proposals unless they conducted their own assessments and monitored their own programmes, much to the frustration of agency staff.

'The donor has refused to fund us as they have a policy of only funding where agencies themselves can monitor programmes. This flies in the face of the humanitarian imperative and is overly paternalistic.' International NGO staff member

This example highlights the challenges in Afghanistan in interpreting humanitarian principles; impartiality requires that a needs assessment is completed prior to programme commencement, but is it justified to compromise when conditions don't permit this? Some agencies went further and suggested that in some areas it wasn't possible to arrive empty-handed and that assessment had to be undertaken hand-in-hand with programme implementation in order to facilitate acceptance. Assessment fatigue linked to the high level of need across many parts of the country meant that communities were unreceptive to assessments that had no certainty of response. While this undermined the principle of impartiality it was considered an operational necessity particularly in areas where agencies had no historic presence and hence were not known by communities or AOGs.

Some agency staff considered that the humanitarian imperative justified compromising impartiality in this way and necessitated the use of remote programming, particularly with well-established partners. Given that aid operations in Afghanistan are conducted against a backdrop of endemic corruption (an issue which humanitarian organisations were quick to raise) donor concerns about the accuracy of assessments and challenges to remote programming seem justified.

5.4 Principles in humanitarian action in the context of the UN/integrated mission

There was considerable unease within the NGO and UN humanitarian community about the role of the UN in Afghanistan and the extent to which its political mandate compromised the ability of UN agencies to deliver principled humanitarian assistance. Many of those interviewed from outside the UN system focused attention on the triple-hatting of the HC who also performs the functions of the Resident Coordinator (RC) and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) for Afghanistan. While some considered that the combination of duties compromised his ability to perform his humanitarian duties as they felt these were subordinated to broader political objectives, others felt that the role was too big to be able to perform across all areas and felt that humanitarian functions tended to receive far less attention than they required as a result.

Many operational UN agency staff interviewed spoke of their frustration with the tight security regulations under which they had to work. While they spoke passionately of the roots of their agency in Afghanistan, the strong links made with civil society in past years, and the importance of humanitarian principles in their work, the current reality for UN agencies is that they can't travel without hard-skinned vehicles and, in most places outside the capital, staff must travel in armed convoys. The implication of this is that beyond the provincial capitals UN agencies conduct much of their work through third party organisations including their monitoring activities.

By sub-contracting out implementation to international and Afghan agencies, the UN have been able to overcome some of the challenges of delivering impartial, independent and politically neutral assistance. But UN staff members were concerned about the impact this had on their profile in communities and broader perceptions about UN agencies. While the issue of whether civilians and AOGs were able to distinguish between 'blue' and 'black' UN was hotly debated by many during the research, such security restrictions tend to make the discussion academic. A UNAMA representative was unequivocal on the issue saying 'there is no discussion; *we [the UN] are here to deliver as one. We must accept the implications of this: that we have limited acceptance [with AOGs and in contested areas] and very limited movement.'* This

leaves very little room for negotiation on humanitarian access, and staff interviewed for the study accepted that their operations reflected a predilection for government-held territory.

5.5 Principled humanitarian action in the context of stabilization

While the initial pressure placed by donors on NGOs to work with PRTs has subsided, stabilization programmes continue to take up considerable space in the aid landscape and the nature of the whole-of-government response means that they continue to have an approach that links political and military agendas with development and humanitarian aims and as such pose a significant threat to principled humanitarian agencies (as well as undermining donors' own GHD principles). That coordination with government development strategies and coexistence with the broader humanitarian community has continued to falter has done little to facilitate the distinction that most NGOs consider is necessary to avoid the risks associated with mistaken identity.

However, with greater clarity about the draw-down of IMF as the transition process gathers pace PRTs are beginning to 'evolve' with troops being replaced by civilian personal. This has been accompanied by efforts on the part of some PRTs to seek to replace deterrence strategies with acceptance and to work more closely to support the Afghan National Development Strategy which is considered by many to be a positive change. In the research feedback meeting one participant mentioned that all PRTs had now finalized and submitted their transition plans which came as a surprise to other participants, only a few of whom were aware of the existence of plans. Finding ways to effectively share information between different aid actors (even in the context of co-existence) will be essential as the planned changes take place in the years ahead.

5.6 Humanitarian principles in the context of ongoing military operations

Many organisations spoke passionately about the failure of IMF and ANA to respect international civil-military guidelines and numerous examples were cited of military forces seeking shelter in schools and medical facilities or scrutinizing hospital records as a means of identifying insurgents. While a Civil-Military Working Group in Kabul had been established in 2001 and began addressing issues between NGOs and ISAF, progress was slow and the most significant output, the 2008 civil-military guidelines for Afghanistan, agreed by the ISAF Commander, NGOs and the UN ended in bitter recriminations from NGOs who protested at the failure of IMF to adopt it in practice.

Interviews with a number of people who have regular contact with IMF highlighted the difficulties in engagement with IMF on civil-military issues and the need for constant dialogue. Despite this, there was some optimism within the UN that headway is being made with ISAF, pointing to the issuance in June 2011 of a standard operating procedure '*that clarifies the roles, responsibilities and proper coordination channels for humanitarian response.*'[61]

Unlike earlier phases of the conflict where all parties had formally agreed to respect humanitarian actors, there is no such humanitarian consensus in Afghanistan today and very little humanitarian space. While there is a widely-held belief by agencies that the Afghan Taliban have an interest in permitting 'neutral' agencies to conduct humanitarian and development activities in areas under their control, many other AOGs either don't have the same interest in supporting communities, or choose not to discriminate.

The situation is at risk of fracturing even further as the 2014 target for the withdrawal of IMF has seen government-backed efforts to fund and train militias in areas of 'kinetic' insurgent activity. The ISAF-supported Afghan Local Police Initiative (ALP) is considered by many to be contributing to the human rights abuses and the rise in displacement and there are fears amongst the humanitarian community that it will contribute to an escalation of conflict.

5.7 Perceptions and principles

The high profile aid failures, negative propaganda and the blurring of boundaries between the traditional non-profit and non-traditional for-profit boundaries have all played a part in blurring perceptions of the NGO community. It's hardly surprising that recent research suggests that Afghans are growing disillusioned and dispirited at the limited levels of progress seen in their country over the past 10 years. While it is difficult to fully quantify the human impact of the huge sums of aid that have poured into the country, it is clear the dividends fall far short of any reasonable expectations.

It isn't just the Government to which Afghans direct their disappointment. Ten years after the Bonn conference, ISAF, the international aid community, and partners are also widely considered not to have delivered on the pledges given there and at numerous conferences since. This trend is mapped in the Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People (2004-2011) which for 2011 shows that the majority of people who participated had some confidence in international NGOs (56 per cent) and national NGOs (54 per cent) but this was reduced from a peak of around 60 per cent between 2007 and 2009.

The growing disillusionment is a significant concern for NGOs whose acceptance strategies rely on the active support and engagement of communities. In an increasingly hostile environment any changes in this could have far-reaching consequences for agencies and those that they assist.

6. CONCLUSION

In the highly politicised, militarized and insecure environment of Afghanistan, donors and humanitarian agencies alike have struggled to uphold humanitarian principles. As the humanitarian marketplace has become more crowded and as calls for greater humanitarian assistance have been trumped by the perceived needs for security sector and stabilization, there has been too great a willingness to make compromises.

In this context it has tended to be the humanitarian organisations that have positioned themselves outside the mainstream and have gone to the greatest lengths to communicate their values and separate their humanitarian identity from those of their peers and competitors, who have enjoyed the greatest access and have often been amongst the best-funded. However, that is not to say that other approaches to gaining access have failed and agencies that have preferred to adopt a low-profile approach have also continued to have access to those in need of assistance and have built important linkages with communities throughout the country.

In approaching Afghanistan from a whole-of-government perspective, donors have been explicit about the importance they have attached to the needs for finding and funding political and security solutions in addition to meeting development and humanitarian needs. While there is evidence that donor conditions have undermined humanitarian principles and that funding streams (particularly stabilization assistance) and delivery mechanisms (particularly the PRTs) have compromised the perception of humanitarian organisations and contributed to the blurring of boundaries which has had dreadful security repercussions for some humanitarian staff, humanitarian organisations' own lack of transparency and the readiness with which they've been willing to compromise their own principles has done little to help the situation.

While recent research on humanitarian principles and practice in Afghanistan has urged like-minded and principled agencies to strengthen collaboration in an effort to reclaim humanitarian space, it is indicative of the complexity of the situation that this seems more unlikely than ever. With a growing diversity of AOGs and concerns about poor security in the run-up to transition, some of the more principled agencies are being more careful than ever not to dilute their humanitarian work and are seeking to position themselves for the change that will follow the draw-down of IMF. It is indicative of the different ways that agencies have interpreted humanitarian principles that distinction from other humanitarian organisations in order to maintain a principled stance is currently considered by some to be more important than seeking to strengthen collaboration to raise the collective bar.

That said, there have also been some encouraging signs from donors (such as the evolution and reduction in size of PRTs) albeit as a result of external forces rather than an internal shift towards good humanitarian donorship. The need to reduce aid budgets, to redefine engagement and re-think strategies towards Afghanistan also provides an opportunity to re-assert the value of humanitarian principles as a means of supporting organisations' access to those in most need. The evolution and potential civilianization of PRTs and progress in linking bilateral aid more closely to Afghan development priorities may address some of the blurring of boundaries that has been so problematic. The rationalization of programmes may also give more space for donors to engage more strategically in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

There is no doubt that the fabric of humanitarianism in Afghanistan has been damaged over the last ten years, yet there does remain an opportunity to start addressing this. While donors have an important role to play in establishing an enabling environment for humanitarian assistance by adopting the principles and practices of the GHD initiative, and coordinating bodies (particularly OCHA) have an essential role to play in filling the information vacuum, it is the humanitarian agencies that must play the most important role. A transparent dialogue between agencies about how to practice principled humanitarian assistance will provide the best possible platform for coordinated action in the future, however distant that appears today.

FOOTNOTES

1) The GHD principles are available from: http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx and the Code of Conduct is available from: http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/codesofconduct/ifrc-codeconduct.html

2) Morris S et al (2006) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Interagency Assessment*, PN-ADG-252,United States Agency for International Development

3) See World Bank 2011 Afghanistan Overview (internet). Available at http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20154015~menuPK:305990~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:305985,00.html

4) http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_statistics.html

5) See CIA World Factbook, 2009 (internet), available at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html

6) United Nations (2011) *Consolidated Appeal Mid-Year Review*, OCHA

7) See Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index (internet). Available at http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010

8) United Nations (2011) *Consolidated Appeal Emergency Revision in Response to Drought*, OCHA

9) See World Bank 2011 Afghanistan Overview (internet). Available at http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20154015~menuPK:305990~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:305985,00.html

10) See Refugees International (2011) *Afghanistan: Responsible US Transition must address Displacement Crisis*, June 28 201, pp.1

11) United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (2011) *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Mid-year Report 2011*, United Nations, 14 July 2011

12) The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (2011) ANSO Quarterly Data Report, Q2, 2011, pp.5

13) For the purposes of this report, 'aid' refers to official development assistance reported to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) plus aid reported to the Afghanistan Donor Assistance Database (DAD) for non-OECD donors

14) Poole L (2011) *Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002 – 2010*, Global Humanitarian Assistance, Development Initiatives

15) International Crisis Group (2011) *Aid and Conflict in Afghanistan*, Asia Report No. 210, 4 August 2011, pp. i

16) Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA), Ministry of Finance, 2009

17) The ANDS (2008 – 2013) was produced in 2008 after a 2-year process of consultation and research. It articulates a 5-year strategy for security, governance, economic growth and poverty eradication and was strengthened in 2010 by the development of a Prioritization and Implementation Plan.

18) Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC data, 2011

19) Ibid

20) Ibid

21) Data from 1995 – 2010 is based on figures from Development Initiatives based on OECD/DAC and UN OCHA Financial Tracking Services (FTS) data. 2011 is based on data solely from the OCHA FTS. Please note that figures from OCHA FTS are often higher than OECD/DAC and hence are not directly comparable.

22) OCHA Financial Tracking System, 23 December 2011

23) For more details on the allocation see NGOs & Humanitarian Reform Project (2010) *Good Practices in Humanitarian Financing: Afghanistan's CERF Underfunded Allocation*, Good Practice Paper Series

24) Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC data; Government of Afghanistan Donor Assistance Database (DAD); Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database of Multilateral Peacekeeping Operations; and Development Initiatives research. See Poole L (2011) *Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002 – 2010*, Global Humanitarian Assistance, Development Initiatives

25) Poole L (2011a) *Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002 – 2010,* Global Humanitarian Assistance, Development Initiatives

26) See North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (2009) *NATO-ISAF Post Operations Emergency Relief Fund*: Fact Sheet, NATO (internet). Available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/factsheets/factsheet-pohrf.pdf. Accessed on 21/11/11

27) Poole L (2011a) *Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002 – 2010*, Global Humanitarian Assistance, Development Initiatives, pp.11

28) Afghanistan DAD in Poole L (2011) *Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002 – 2010*, Global Humanitarian Assistance, Development Initiatives, pp.11

29) Ibid

30) United States Forces (2009) Money as a Weapon System Afghanistan, Commander's Emergency Response Program SOP (Updated Dec 2009), USFOR-A Pub 1-06

31) House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2011) *The UK's Foreign Policy Approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan: Fourth Report of Session 2010-2011, Volume II Additional Written Evidence,* 31) The House of Commons, London, pp. Ev w2

32) OCHA (2011a) *Consolidated Appeal Emergency Revision in Response to Drought*, OCHA, pp2.

33) OCHA, Afghanistan Monthly Update, September 2011 (internet). Available at http://ochaonline.un.org/afghanistan/Reports/tabid/5289/language/en-US/Default.aspx

34) UNHCR/MoRR National IDP Taskforce, November 2011

35) See http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1742

36) See http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html

37) http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/media/PDFs/18 per cent20october per cent202011 per cent20isaf per cent20placemat.pdf

38) A recent audit of CERP-funded activities in Laghman Province by Office for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (2011) noted that although 'CERP's purpose is to enable commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian and reconstruction requirements… [it] has been used for large-scale projects.'

39) See the SIGAR audit cited above and also Johnson G, Ramachandran V &Walz J (2011) *The Commander's Emergency Response Program in Afghanistan: Refining US Military Capabilities in Stability and in-conflict Development, Working Paper 265, September 2011, Center for Global Development*, pp19

40) This issue was raised by Norway in a statement on the situation in Afghanistan to the UNSC on January 6th 2010 (internet). See http://www.norway-un.org/Statements/Security-Council/SC-The-situation-in-Afghanistan/

41) ibid

42) The 2011 CAP was 58.9 per cent funded; the 2010 CAP was 65.1 per cent funded; the 2009 CAP was 76.4 per cent funded (OCHA Financial Tracking Service)

43) OCHA Financial Tracking System, 27/11/11

44) See Afghanistan ERF Webpage available at http://ochaonline.un.org/afghanistan/AppealsFunding/EmergencyResponseFund/tabid/6432/language/en-US/Default.aspx

45) See Afghanistan – List of ERF/CHF contributions and allocations in 2011 as of 25 November 2011 (internet). Available at http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_RPool2C_C1_Y2011___1111250204.pdf

46) See the recommendations of the Pakistan ERF evaluation. Available at http://www.pakresponse.info/Portals/0/ERF/FINAL per cent20Report per cent20- per cent20Evaluation per cent20of per cent20the per cent20Pakistan per cent20Emergency per cent20Response per cent20Fund.pdf

47) See 'Afghanistan drought puts 2 million short of food, aid groups say' (internet) at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2011-11-18/afghanistan-drought-food-shortage

48) DARA (2010) *The Humanitarian Response Index 2010: The Problems of Politicisation*, DARA, Madrid, Afghanistan Case Study, pp.135

49) Pantuliano S et al (2011) *Counter-terrorism and humanitarian action: Tensions, impact and ways forward*, Humanitarian Policy Group Policy Brief 43, October 2011, ODI, pp1

50) Donini A (2009) *Afghanistan: Humanitarianism under Threat,* Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power & Perceptions, The Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, pp.6

51) Featherstone A (2011) *Bridging the Gap between Policy and Practice: The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and Humanitarian Principles,* Caritas Europa, pp15

52) 23 December 2007, available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/ in Runge P (2009) *The Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Role Model for Civil-Military Relations?* Occasional Paper IV, Bonn International Center for Conversion, Association of German Development NGOs (VENRO), pp.18

53) Aga Khan Foundation, Care, Catholic Relief Services, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Save the Children (2010) *White Paper: Being Smart about Development in Afghanistan*, pp.1

54) The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak council for Australian NGOs working in the field of international aid and development. ACFID has more than 70 members operating in over 100 developing countries.

55) Australian Council for International Development (2010) In It for the Long Haul: *Delivering Australian Aid to Afghanistan,* ACFID Research Paper, pp.1

56) Aga Khan Foundation, Care, Catholic Relief Services, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Save the Children (2010) *White Paper: Being Smart about Development in Afghanistan*, pp.8

57) See Afghan NGO Security Office (2010) Quarterly Data Report Q4, 2009 (internet). Available at http://www.afgnso.org/

58) See Aga Khan Foundation, Care, Catholic Relief Services, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Save the Children (2010) *White Paper: Being Smart about Development in Afghanistan*

59) For example, Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets In Disaster Relief ("Oslo Guidelines") developed by UNOCHA in 2006

60) See Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan, Version 1.0, 20 May 2008 (internet), available at http://www.afgana.org/showart.php?id=323&rubrica=223

61) Refugees International (2011) *Afghanistan: Responsible US Transition must address Displacement Crisis,* June 28 2011

62) The Asia Foundation (2011) Afghanistan in 2011: *A Survey of the Afghan People*, The Asia Foundation