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Committee

**Reconstructing
Afghanistan**

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Footnotes

In the footnotes for this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12'.

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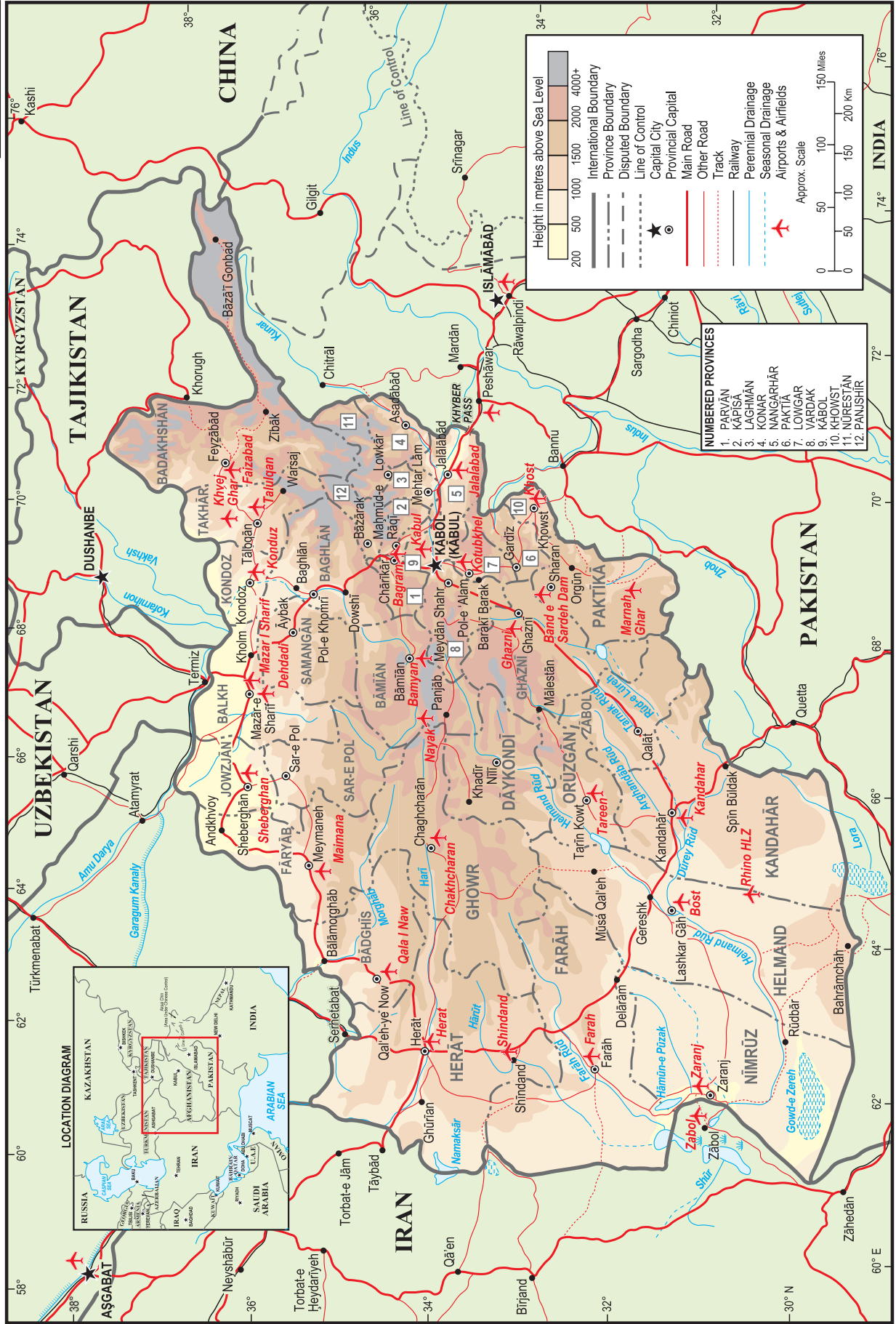
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Map 1: Afghanistan

WORLD BRIEFING MAPS

Series GSGS 5865
Sheet Afghanistan
Edition 5-GSGS



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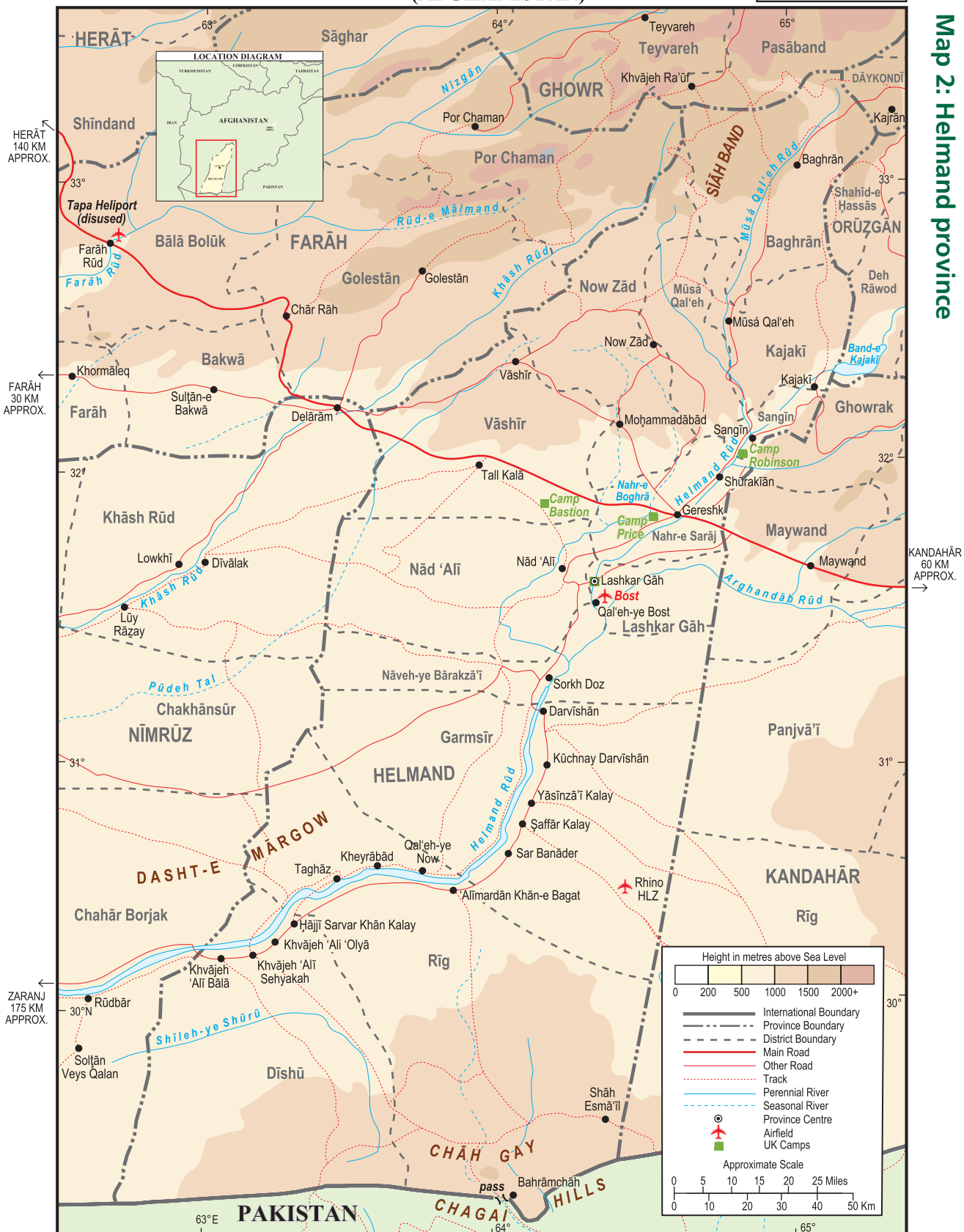
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WORLD BRIEFING MAPS

HELMAND PROVINCE (AFGHANISTAN)

Series GSGS 5865
 Sheet Helmand Province
 Edition 4-GSGS

Map 2: Helmand province



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Summary

As a result of 30 years of conflict Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and will not meet any of the Millennium Development Goal targets in 2015. The UK and the international community have a responsibility to assist Afghanistan to achieve lasting peace, stability, reconstruction and development. We support fully the UK Government's effort in Afghanistan and the priority which it attaches to these goals.

Despite the difficulties it faces, Afghanistan has made significant progress in governance, economic growth, health and education. Such achievements deserve to be recognised. However Afghanistan will need substantial development assistance for a long time. DFID and the international community have a vital role to play in this regard.

Increasing insecurity and the continuing insurgency are threatening the reconstruction effort in many parts of Afghanistan. The role of NATO forces in building up a capable Afghan security sector is thus important. Cooperation with Pakistan in controlling the borders more effectively is also essential to stop the supply of Taliban recruits. There is no easy solution to the security problems—a long-term commitment is required.

Since our visit last October, a number of developments have highlighted to us that the political situation in Afghanistan and the relationship between the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and the international community could become increasingly fragile. The civilian and military international effort is entirely dependent on the goodwill of the Government and people of Afghanistan. Whilst the Government of Afghanistan is fully entitled to criticise the international effort, in relation to the UK contribution we are concerned that the tone and timing of the GoA's recent comments may risk undermining British public support for the UK's long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

It is clear to us that without tangible improvements in people's lives the insurgency will not be defeated. Such improvements need to be led by Afghan institutions. This means increasing the capacity of the Government of Afghanistan to deliver services throughout the country. Reforms of government structures at the sub-national level are crucial because the rural areas are precisely where insurgents are recruited and poppy cultivation is greatest.

The creation of an Independent Directorate of Local Governance is a step in the right direction and clarification of the role of Provincial Governors should be a priority. Community Development Councils have been an effective mechanism for ensuring local ownership of development projects

The opium trade is controlled by powerful criminal gangs who operate with impunity in a lawless environment and therefore support the insurgency. Small farmers grow poppies because the drug traders come to their farm to buy the crop. It is difficult to transport other crops—even high-value, low-volume crops like saffron or mint—to market because the roads are not safe. It is not surprising that poor farmers consider poppy cultivation to be an attractive choice in a high-risk environment and in the absence of other meaningful options for earning a living. Expectations that poppy cultivation will be reduced over a short period are therefore misplaced. Crop eradication by aerial spraying risks increasing insecurity in already insecure provinces. Instead there is a desperate need for an integrated counter-narcotics strategy which provides irrigation, credit, infrastructure and alternative

employment opportunities. The strategy must also include criminal prosecution of big traders and extension of the rule of law to rural areas.

The position of women in Afghan society has improved since the fall of the Taliban but these gains could easily be lost. Insufficient attention has been paid to this by the donor community. There is a dangerous tendency to accept in Afghanistan practices which would not be countenanced elsewhere, because of what is described as the particular “culture” and “tradition” of the country. We believe the rights of women should be upheld equally in all countries. The Government of Afghanistan has a vital role to play in this by ensuring that the international human rights commitments which it has made are fully honoured.

The UK effort in Helmand is a joint civilian-military one. Under difficult circumstances the Provincial Reconstruction Team is working to improve its operational practice and to try new methods of working. We commend this effort. However progress in Helmand will ultimately depend on building local capacity and winning local consent. The Taliban are not an homogenous group and some have already come over to the Government side. Efforts at disarmament and reintegration should continue.

The UK Government’s commitment to working in Afghanistan must be reflected in appropriate training, support and working conditions for civilian staff.

Progress in training the Afghan National Army has been good. Similar progress has not been made with the Afghan National Police and this threatens the establishment of the rule of law.

Commitments made by the international donor community to channel funding through Government of Afghanistan structures have not been met. The use of parallel structures and foreign contractors dilutes significantly the beneficial impact of aid. Donor coordination would have been strengthened by the appointment of a high-level UN Special Representative and we are dismayed that plans for this have been so far blocked by the Government of Afghanistan.

We were frequently told that the people of Afghanistan are uncertain about the future, the long-term commitment of the international community and the consequent resilience of national institutions. Greater donor co-ordination and support for the Government of Afghanistan would help meet these concerns

1 Introduction

Our inquiry

1. The previous International Development Committee last reported on Afghanistan in 2002–03.¹ In December 2005 we held a one-off evidence session to provide an update on developments there.² In July 2007 we decided that the situation in Afghanistan merited a full inquiry, including a visit. As the International Development Select Committee we naturally focus on development. We nevertheless recognise the interaction between development and security, including key regional security issues.

2. DFID has declared that it intends to undertake more work in fragile and insecure environments.³ It acknowledges that “fragile states are the hardest countries in the world to help develop. Working with them is difficult and costly and carries significant risks.”⁴ DFID aims to develop appropriate ways of working in such states, to be more effective at doing so and to work more closely with other government departments. The purpose of this inquiry is to examine how DFID is meeting the challenge of delivering development assistance in the insecure environment which is Afghanistan.

3. We began our inquiry in October 2007. We received written evidence from 15 organisations and individuals. We held three oral evidence sessions in the UK taking evidence from government officials, non-governmental organisations, an independent consultant and the Secretary of State for International Development. During the course of the inquiry we also met with a group of visiting Afghan members of the National Assembly. We are grateful to all these organisations and individuals for their contribution to this inquiry.

4. We visited Afghanistan at the end of October 2007. Full details of our visit programme can be found as Annex A to this report. We spent three days in Kabul meeting DFID and FCO officials, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), non-governmental organisations, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative, female members of the National Assembly, Government Ministers and officials, other donors and academic commentators. We also visited some DFID-funded projects. We then split into two groups with one group flying north to Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province and the other south to Lashkar Gah in Helmand. In Mazar-e-Sharif we met the Provincial Governor, the Provincial Council, representatives of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) from Sweden and Finland and a USAID representative and visited a number of projects. In Helmand we stayed at the Provincial Reconstruction Team base in Lashkar Gah. We met the UK Commander of Task Force Helmand, UK troops, the Provincial Governor, members of the Provincial Council and representatives of line ministries in the province. We also visited a number of projects. Our final day was spent in Kabul. We visited Community Development Council projects and we met the President of Afghanistan, the

1 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2002-03, *Afghanistan: the transition from humanitarian relief to reconstruction and development*, HC 84.

2 International Development Committee, Session 2005-06, *Reconstructing Afghanistan*, HC 772

3 DFID, *Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states*, January 2005.

4 DFID, *ibid.* p 5

Pakistan Ambassador, Ashraf Ghani—a former Finance Minister, and the National Youth Parliament.

5. Our visit was extremely informative and we are grateful to all those who took the time to meet us and share their views with us. We are also grateful to our hosts in DFID and the Foreign Office for facilitating the visit and to our close protection team for their diligence in ensuring our safety.

6. We had hoped to report our findings to the House at the end of 2007. However we noted the Prime Minister's comments in the debate on the Queen's Speech on 6 November that he intended to make a statement on Afghanistan, including on the Government's proposals for development there.⁵ We therefore decided to wait for the statement so as to be able to take full account in this report of any change in Government policy. We resolved instead to write to the Secretary of State with some of our preliminary views in order that they might inform the Government's discussions. The text of the letter is reprinted as Annex B to this report.

The importance of being in Afghanistan

7. Afghanistan is an insecure country in a politically unstable region. In particular its immediate neighbours Pakistan and Iran are the focus of international attention. Increased insecurity in the region would have significant international implications and would make the task of bringing security and stability to Afghanistan an even more difficult one.

8. Afghanistan is also one of the poorest countries in the world and is off-track in progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals.⁶ Over half the population live on less than US\$1 a day.⁷ The British and Irish Afghan Agencies Group (BAAG) reports that Afghanistan is ranked 173 out of 178 countries listed in the 2004 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index; life expectancy is 47 years; 600 children under five die every day and 25% of all children before their fifth birthday; and the maternal mortality rate is the second highest in the world.⁸ Turning around such stark statistics would normally take many years; in an insecure environment the challenge is even greater.

9. Amidst the ongoing insurgency and with poppy cultivation increasing in 2007, the newly-appointed British Ambassador to Afghanistan, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, expressed his belief that the UK's commitment to Afghanistan would last for decades.⁹ The UK commitment in terms of development was cemented at the London Conference in January 2006 when the Government signed a ten-year Partnership Agreement with the Government of Afghanistan including a pledge to give £330 million in development assistance over the three year period 2006–09.¹⁰ This is part of a total package of £500 million, which includes funding for counter-narcotics. It makes DFID's programme in

5 HC Deb, 6 November 2007, col 23-34

6 Ev 50 [DFID]

7 Q 2 [Mr Drummond]

8 Ev 82 [BAAG]

9 BBC News 24, "UK in Afghanistan for decades," 20 June 2007, bbc.co.uk

10 Ev 52 [DFID]

Afghanistan its sixth largest in the world and the UK Afghanistan's second largest bilateral donor.

10. In his 2007 Mansion House speech the Prime Minister said, "In Afghanistan we will work with the international community to match our military and security effort with new support for political reform and for economic and social development."¹¹ **We fully support the continuing commitment of the UK Government, in partnership with the Government and people of Afghanistan, to help to bring peace and security to Afghanistan and to promote political reform and reconstruction and development. We accept that the commitment, in terms of development assistance, is likely to last at least a generation. As one of the poorest countries in the world, with continuing humanitarian needs, Afghanistan should remain a major focus for DFID.**

11. Since our visit, a number of developments have highlighted to us that the political situation in Afghanistan and the relationship between the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and the international community could become increasingly fragile. The civilian and military international effort is entirely dependent on the goodwill of the Government and people of Afghanistan. Whilst the Government of Afghanistan is fully entitled to criticise the international effort, in relation to the UK contribution we are concerned that the tone and timing of the GoA's recent comments may risk undermining British public support for the UK's long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

Development gains since 2001

12. Afghanistan has suffered from years of foreign occupation and conflict. What is striking is that, since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, and despite continued conflict in parts of the country, Afghanistan has begun to make progress in some key areas including health, education, governance and the economy. For example, in health it is now estimated that access to basic health care has increased from 9% to 82%.¹² We visited a hospital in Lashkar Gah with little modern equipment but we were told that the national immunisation programme carried on in government and insurgent controlled areas regardless of the security situation. DFID told us that immunisation against measles was saving 35,000 lives annually.¹³ The under-five mortality rate has improved from one in four to one in five since 2004. The proportion of women receiving ante-natal care has increased from 5% to 30%.¹⁴ Gains in the health sector have been achieved by an innovative funding process which sees the Ministry of Health sub-contracting service delivery to NGOs and other actors.

13. There are now over five million children enrolled in schools, one-third of them girls.¹⁵ Written evidence from DFID confirms that this represents 37% of children between six and thirteen. Of the primary school-age population 29% of girls and 43% of boys are enrolled. In urban areas this rises to 51% of girls and 55% of boys.¹⁶ Under the Taliban it

11 Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, The Lord Mayor's Banquet, 12 November 2007

12 Q 7 [DFID]

13 Q 2 [DFID]

14 Ev 50 [DFID]

15 Ev 50 [DFID]

16 Ev 61 [DFID]

was forbidden for girls to attend school making this is a significant milestone. It was pointed out to us that the insurgents often target girls on their way to and from school in order to force the closure of girls' schools. In areas of high insecurity such as Helmand many schools remain closed. Since 2001 nearly 2,000 schools have been built although there is still a desperate shortage of trained teachers.¹⁷

14. Afghanistan held Presidential elections in 2004 and parliamentary elections in 2005. In the latter there was a requirement for 25% of the seats to be female. In the event 28% of the seats were won by women.¹⁸ There are also community and provincial forums in which women are represented.¹⁹ The non-opium economy has grown fairly steadily with growth rates averaging 10% over the last three years.²⁰ While such growth rates are partly a reflection of the low economic base from which Afghanistan has emerged as well as high levels of aid dependence, they also reflect a significant increase in economic activity and a more open business environment.²¹

15. Although there is a long way to go, such progress is significant. Typically post-conflict countries slip back into conflict within five years and the gains made in the immediate aftermath of the conflict are lost in what Paul Collier has called “the conflict trap”.²² This has not happened in Afghanistan. Yet these development gains do not appear in many newspaper articles about the country which tend instead to focus on the insurgency in Helmand Province where the majority of British troops are stationed. **It is important that the job of helping to bring security to Afghanistan, in which over 7,000 British troops are engaged, is given full support by the British public. We recognise the strong UK media interest in this involvement given that British troops are putting their lives on the line. While acknowledging that continuing insecurity threatens to set back progress, we are also conscious that the media focus on this has meant that achievements in political reform, economic growth and in the provision of basic services are not getting the attention they deserve. We recommend that DFID’s media strategy for Afghanistan is strengthened to ensure that development achievements in Afghanistan are given the press coverage in the UK which they merit.**

The gap between expectations and capability

16. We found that there is a large gap between the Afghan people’s expectations about how long reconstruction will take and the capacity of the international community and the Government of Afghanistan to deliver this. In a recent survey by the Asia Foundation only 42% of respondents thought that the country was moving in the right direction and only 49% considered themselves better-off than under Taliban rule. Evidence from AfghanAid states that, “unmet reconstruction and development expectations on the part of Afghan rural populations are further destabilising the country.”²³ Yet building a successful state,

17 Q 31 [DFID]

18 Ev 51 [DFID]

19 Ev 67 [Afghanaid]

20 Ev 51 [DFID]

21 Centre for Strategic and International Studies, *Breaking Point: measuring progress in Afghanistan*, 23 February 2007.

22 Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

23 Ev 81 [AfghanAid]

which can deliver a wide array of services, is a long process, often not without setbacks.²⁴ Increasingly, even amongst donors, there is an expectation that state capacity to deliver services can be achieved within a few years. This is unrealistic, especially where such capacity has never existed historically.

17. On our visit we were repeatedly asked what the UK was doing in Afghanistan in terms of reconstruction and development. In Helmand and Balkh some Provincial Council members were not aware of the fact that DFID channels 80% of its funding through Government of Afghanistan mechanisms. Similarly in Kabul we found amongst Community Development Council members a lack of awareness of how the UK is indirectly helping to fund the schools which these Councils were building. Most Afghans responding to the Asia Foundation survey were not aware of projects funded by the UK. They cited the USA, Japan and Germany as having provided most aid for projects in their district.²⁵ The reality is that the UK is the second largest bilateral donor.²⁶ **Expectations need to be managed so that they accord more realistically with the capacity—both of the Government of Afghanistan and of the donor community—to deliver. Greater publicity of successes and of the nature and scope of DFID’s work in Afghanistan would help in this regard. We recommend that DFID develop a new communications strategy in Afghanistan to ensure accurate information about the scale of its work is widely circulated.**

The structure of the report

18. The structure of the report is as follows: Chapter 2 provides an outline of DFID’s programme in Afghanistan and a discussion of the tools available to work in such insecure environments. Chapters 3 to 7 each focus on one of five areas we consider to be the main challenges and priorities for DFID and other donors. These are: donor coordination, security, governance and sub-national governance, counter-narcotics and rural livelihoods. Because of the UK’s focus on Helmand, Chapter 8 looks specifically at the UK effort here and especially at the work of the Provincial Reconstruction Team which is a joint civil and military effort.

19. Throughout the report we have sought to identify the impact of development on the role and position of women in Afghan society. Whilst there have been many gains for women in Afghanistan since 2001 in terms of the constitution and public commitments to safeguarding women’s legal and civil rights, there remain a number of serious challenges to women’s human rights and position in society. The realisation of their politically acknowledged civil and political rights and social and economic status is not currently guaranteed.²⁷ **We believe it is fundamental to the rebuilding of Afghanistan that international commitments made by the Government of Afghanistan and by donors on the rights of women are honoured and given greater priority.**

24 See, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Transforming Fragile States: examples of practical experience*, Nomos: Germany, April 2007.

25 The Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2007*, Asia Foundation, 2007, p43.

26 DFID, *Afghanistan Development Facts*. Figures are for 2005 according to the OECD DAC. The USA is the largest bilateral donor (US\$1.34 billion)

27 Ev 83, 103 [BAAG; GAPS]

2 Working in insecure environments

Conditions of service for UK staff

20. The British Mission in Afghanistan, which includes all FCO, DFID and other civil servants is one of the largest in the world. There are 143 UK civil servants based in Kabul alone. DFID Afghanistan has 43 staff and the Foreign Office has a political team of 10 which is the largest anywhere in the world. In addition there are counter-narcotics, HM Revenue & Customs, rule of law, Serious Organised Crime Agency and Intelligence staff. The large number of civil servants reflects the priority which the UK Government attaches to Afghanistan.

21. In our report on DFID's Departmental Report 2006 we questioned whether DFID had a comparative advantage in fragile states or if it was simply acting as the donor of last resort, seeking to fill those gaps which other donors had failed to.²⁸ The Department reports that "between 2001 and 2006 DFID increased bilateral expenditure in fragile states from £243.5 million in 2000–01 to £745.6 million in 2005–06. This represents an increase from 17% to 30% of DFID's overall bilateral spend. In 2006–07 this increased further to £800.1 million or 31% of our bilateral spend."²⁹ According to DFID, international commitments on poverty reduction and peace and stability will not be met without engaging with fragile states.³⁰

22. Questions about where DFID has a comparative advantage apply not only to the choice of country in which it works but also to the terms and conditions for DFID staff. Because of its continuing insecurity, Afghanistan is considered to be a difficult environment in which to work for long periods at a time. DFID staff work in-country for six-week periods followed by a two-week break or 'breather' during which they must leave the country. Most staff sign-on for a 12-month posting although we were told that some intend to stay longer. All posts are unaccompanied which means that staff with families have to cope with long periods of separation from spouses and children. Consequently staff attracted to the posting tend to be young and without dependants. Housing is generally shared and movement is restricted and dependent on the availability of close protection and armoured vehicles. We requested information from other donors about the conditions of work for their staff. From the responses we received, UK conditions are broadly comparable with other donors although the UK package is considered by others to be among the best.

23. Nevertheless for some people there is no adequate compensation for the loss of family or social life. This means there is a limited pool of people who will agree to work in fragile states and an even more restricted number will stay for longer than one year. Institutional knowledge and capacity is easily lost when there is a high staff turnover. Such factors need to be taken into account if DFID is intending to continue and indeed to expand its work in insecure environments and fragile states. It may be appropriate for DFID to consider

28 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2006-07, *Department for International Development Departmental Report 2006*, HC 71, paras 20-24.

29 Ev 53 [DFID]

30 DFID, *Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states*, January 2005.

increased use of contracted staff with relevant experience to increase the pool of expertise available.

24. Another concern is that DFID staff are given less time to prepare for deployments abroad than their colleagues in the FCO. **The work DFID staff undertake in environments such as Afghanistan is demanding and context-specific. We believe that they should be given a level of support which is commensurate with the responsibilities they are asked to bear, including an appropriate level of language, cultural and security training.**

25. It also strikes us that the practice of having a two-week breather every six weeks has implications for the efficiency of Embassy staff work. It is necessary to have someone else take over your work when you are away which means that much time is lost in the handing over process before and after breathers. In the absence of the person with lead responsibility a decision may be made which that person might not have made. We learned of a specific example of where this had happened in Helmand. Increasing the numbers of civilian staff is one way around this problem. Another might be to extend the continuous work period to two months.

26. **We agree that Afghanistan should be a priority for DFID. We understand that consideration is being given to how best to encourage staff to work in insecure environments and to increasing the length of postings. We believe that this is an important issue if DFID intends to remain in countries such as Afghanistan since there is a limited pool of staff who will undertake such postings. Current working conditions are comparable with those of other donors but consideration should be given to the impact of six-week periods of work on overall efficiency. We would urge DFID to encourage those staff who gain experience of working in Afghanistan to return to similar posts after a sufficient break so as to build up a cadre of DFID staff with experience of working in insecure environments.**

Logistical support

27. Afghanistan is a fairly large country, divided into 34 administrative provinces, with a mountainous terrain which makes travel and communications difficult. Although UK troops have special responsibilities in Helmand Province, the DFID programme is a country-wide one. This means that DFID and other civil servants periodically need to be able to travel outside Kabul to other parts of the country including Helmand to monitor projects and to build up relationships with provincial leaders. Security considerations and the lack of passable roads mean that travel by air is usually the most appropriate method. However they are currently dependent on military air transport, itself in high demand.³¹ The Prime Minister has recently announced that more helicopters will be made available to assist the military effort.³² The Secretary of State for International Development, Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, told us that such helicopters could also assist the civilian effort.³³

31 Defence Committee, Thirteenth Report of Session 2006-07, *UK Operations in Afghanistan*, HC 408, paras 112-116.

32 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007

33 Q 179 [DFID]

28. We were able to travel north to Balkh province in a fixed-wing Beechcraft aeroplane which belonged to HM Customs & Revenue but access to this is dependent on their need for it. Those of us who travelled to Helmand did so in military aircraft. We were accompanied on these visits by a number of DFID and FCO staff who used the opportunity to travel to Helmand and Balkh. In Afghanistan we learned that there had been a request for a non-military aircraft to assist the civilian effort but that a bid for a suitable aircraft had to be cancelled, and the deposit forgone, because HM Treasury had not approved the funds. The Secretary of State said that consideration was being given to purchasing a fixed-wing aircraft from the Stabilisation Aid Fund.³⁴ **We welcome the approval of an increased number of helicopters in Afghanistan for the military effort announced by the Prime Minister on 12 December 2007. We would also welcome an update on the deployment of those helicopters and confirmation of how much increased effective capacity will be available. In addition we noted the use we made of US operated helicopters in Helmand and would like to know if they will still be available after the increase in the UK contribution.**

29. **We also note that DFID and Embassy employees are hindered in carrying out their jobs in a timely fashion when they are subject to lengthy waits for secure transport. Given the priority which the UK Government has placed on Afghanistan, we consider that appropriate logistical support for the civilian effort is essential. We recommend the early provision of a dedicated aeroplane for the use of DFID and other Embassy staff to carry out their work in Afghanistan.**

30. In Kabul and elsewhere international staff frequently undertake short journeys in armoured vehicles with close protection teams. This is unavoidable at present. UK close protection teams adopt a low-key approach and ensure their weapons are not visible. We regard this less confrontational and less visible approach as preferable.

DFID's programme in Afghanistan

31. DFID is committed to providing £330 million in development assistance to Afghanistan in the three year period 2006–09. In the 2007–08 financial year DFID provided £107 million, excluding administrative costs. Of this, DFID committed £20 million to Helmand Province, an increase from £16 million in 2006–07, of which £4 million went through the cross-departmental Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP) for Quick Impact Projects³⁵ (see chapter 8). On 12 December the Prime Minister announced development and stabilisation assistance of £450 million for the period 2009–12.³⁶ The Secretary of State informed us that £345 million of this was for development assistance and £105 million was for the newly created Stabilisation Aid Fund which replaces the Global Conflict Prevention Pool.³⁷ DFID told us this represented a very significant scaling-up of effort in terms of stabilisation and reconstruction activity. However, how the additional funds would be spent had not yet been decided, except that there would be an increase in

34 Q 179 [DFID]

35 Ev 53 [DFID]

36 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007

37 Q 130 [DFID]

staff levels in Helmand.³⁸ **We welcome the allocation of additional funds for development and stabilisation assistance across Afghanistan. We wish to be given more details on the allocation of the funding in response to this report.**

32. DFID's programme in Afghanistan has three main objectives. These are:

- Building effective state institutions;
- Improving economic management, and the effectiveness of aid to Afghanistan; and
- Improving the livelihoods of rural people.

These priorities have been decided upon in consultation with the Government of Afghanistan which requested that donors identify only three priority sectors each.³⁹ In addition DFID's wider goals are: improving donor coordination, supporting the development of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), and contributing to the wider UK government effort in Helmand.

33. Because DFID attaches significant importance to building up effective state institutions, over 80% of its funding is channelled through the Government of Afghanistan. DFID told us:

“we direct over 80% of our assistance through Government channels because this helps the Government to develop the capacity to deliver basic services; to manage public finances effectively; and to build credibility and legitimacy with the Afghan people.”⁴⁰

The funds are mainly channelled through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) administered by the World Bank.

The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF)

34. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund was established as a means of providing support to an inexperienced government in an insecure environment. In order to ensure full accountability the World Bank reimburses the Government of Afghanistan for approved expenditure and all the accounts are audited by an external agency, Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Currently 27 donors contribute to the Fund and DFID is the largest single contributor. The ARTF has two strands: a “recurrent window” to support the operating costs of the Afghan Government (predominantly public sector wages) and an “investment window” to fund development programmes.

35. A number of NGOs have expressed concerns about the large percentage of DFID funds which go through the ARTF and the consequent implications of this for NGO funds. For example Oxfam writes:

38 Q 140 [DFID]

39 Q 5 [DFID]

40 Ev 53 [DFID]

“A number of donors, including the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), provide significant funds through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), which provides a predictable and accountable source of funds for recurrent government expenditure. However, it is regrettable that DFID has very substantially reduced its funding for Afghan and international NGOs, who play an important role in grassroots capacity building, rural development and support for delivery of essential services.”⁴¹

36. The allocation of DFID funds is based on the assumption that the state must be built-up and enabled so that it can carry out the normal functions of the state including development and reconstruction. In his statement to Parliament the Prime Minister commented that the UK Government believed that channelling aid through the Afghan government was “the best route to achieving sustainable progress and the best value for money.”⁴² DFID told us that:

“We are very conscious of NGO concerns about this. We made a conscious decision to try to shift the way we did business to give the Government authority over it, but when we look at the way government does business a lot of the money put through it is then delivered by NGO programmes. The health sector is a good example. The Ministry of Health subcontracts NGOs to deliver programmes. So they still have a big role to play. Obviously, there are things that NGOs do which are beyond service delivery, and we need to ensure the capacity of advocacy NGOs is still being built up to hold government to account.”⁴³

Building a robust civil society capable of holding the government to account is crucial in newly-formed democracies and NGOs are often best placed to facilitate this important task. In Afghanistan it is particularly important that NGOs promoting women’s rights are also funded.⁴⁴

37. DFID went on to clarify that if NGOs could deliver services in more insecure areas it would be appropriate to use them in these areas:

“As the security situation improves in some places but not others there is a constant question in our mind as to how to deliver services in the less secure areas. One must also take account of where the NGOs are able to deliver. If NGOs are to help to deliver services in the more difficult places where the Government’s national programmes find it hard to operate we should think hard about helping them. If the NGO proposals for delivering services are in places where the Government’s programmes can start to reach, then there is much more of a case for the delivery of those services to be provided or subcontracted by government.”⁴⁵

However we were told that many NGOs have stopped programmes in insecure provinces because of security concerns. ActionAid reported that “field activities have been severely

41 Ev 116 [Oxfam]

42 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007

43 Q 14 [DFID]

44 Ev 133 [Womankind Worldwide]

45 Q 14 [DFID]

hampered due to increased acts of violence and threats to staff; as a result of this volatile environment programme costs have significantly increased.”⁴⁶ Moreover NGOs may be reluctant to receive government funding directly because it affects their perceived neutrality.⁴⁷ We were told that only four NGOs are operational in Helmand Province. We will examine in chapter 8 the difficulties for non-military actors attempting to deliver development in provinces where security is poor.

38. We agree that DFID’s objectives should be to help build and support a viable sovereign state in Afghanistan and that the majority of DFID funds should therefore continue to be directed through the Government of Afghanistan. The priority for donors should be the “Afghanisation of development”—building up Afghan capacity at all levels for successful development and reconstruction. However DFID must also continue to ensure that funding is available for NGOs in their key advocacy tasks including helping to establish a robust civil society capable of holding the government to account. DFID should also ensure that NGOs promoting women’s rights are adequately funded.

Improving economic management

39. Another key element of DFID’s assistance to the Government of Afghanistan is in improving economic management. While economic growth has been steady, the Government is heavily dependent on foreign aid to meet its recurrent costs. The Government of Afghanistan currently raises only 6% of its revenue through taxation.⁴⁸ DFID is working with the Ministry of Finance to increase tax revenue and manage it more effectively.

40. On our visit we saw the beneficial impact of economic growth, especially in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast 12% economic growth this year.⁴⁹ The IMF has also established a set of targets for the Government to support economic reform, including increasing revenue mobilisation. We were told that the Government of Afghanistan was working towards these targets. **We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue to work towards International Monetary Fund revenue mobilisation targets as a means to ensuring that its future funding base is secure. We believe that DFID’s assistance in this respect is vital to progress.**

The distribution of DFID funds

41. Approximately 20% of DFID funds is allocated directly to Helmand Province to support the wider UK effort there. DFID told us:

“We support development in Helmand both through our rural livelihoods programme and through HMG's Quick Impact Projects, designed to deliver immediate benefits to

46 Ev 62 [ActionAid]

47 Ev 62 [ActionAid]

48 Q 132 [DFID]

49 Ev 51 [DFID]

local communities. DFID spent around £16 million in Helmand in 2006–07, and we have committed to spend up to £20 million this year.⁵⁰

The Helmand Agricultural and Rural Development Programme supported the construction of four roads, 554 wells, and 482 community projects.⁵¹ The programme also provides access to micro-credit to promote non-opium livelihoods.⁵²

42. Concerns have been expressed that the geographical focus of UK aid is based on military imperatives. For example BAAG suggests that:

“DFID should consolidate gains already made in areas that are stable, for example Balkh and Jowsjan. The British focus on Helmand may lead to a situation where gains made in stable provinces cannot be consolidated. BAAG members have been encouraged to suggest projects in Helmand and Kabul areas but find it difficult to identify and maintain funding for projects in equally poverty-stricken areas.”⁵³

Similarly the Institute for State Effectiveness writes that:

“Countries which have greater troop presence are being placed under increased pressure to allocate development funding in line with political and military-protection strategies using the civilian arms of PRTs as “development” agencies. An exaggeration of this funding strategy will have long term consequences for both donor harmonisation as well as equity of funding across different provinces. Numerous examples already exist from north eastern provinces where claims are being made that insecure provinces in the south are benefiting through increasing aid, as compared to the relatively stable north where the perception is of reductions in aid funding.”⁵⁴

43. In fact most DFID funding for Helmand is channelled through Government of Afghanistan programmes and not the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The recent increase in stabilisation assistance for Helmand is evidence that the Government considers Helmand to be a UK priority. These funds will be channelled through the Stabilisation Aid Fund (see paragraph 31).

44. We do not consider that the UK Government’s development programme is unduly slanted towards Helmand at present. 80% of DFID’s funding is channelled through the Government of Afghanistan. The UK effort in Afghanistan is thus a “whole of Afghanistan” one. Misunderstandings about this need to be countered in Afghanistan, and in the UK, by improved media strategies.

45. Given the UK leadership of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand it is important that sufficient resources are available to ensure that stabilisation and development follow military action speedily. This need not be solely the responsibility

50 Ev 53 [DFID]

51 Ev 50 [DFID]

52 Ev 58 [DFID]

53 Ev 81 [BAAG]

54 Ev 114 [Institute for State Effectiveness]

of the UK since other donors are present there. DFID should also try to ensure that gains made in more secure provinces are not lost for lack of funds and should coordinate with other donors more effectively in this regard.

46. During our visit we were told that in Afghanistan 'everything is a priority' because 'everything is broken'. As a country emerging from conflict the establishment of security and the rule of law is important for the survival of the state. At the same time people's unmet needs in terms of employment and access to basic services threatens to undermine their faith in the newly created state. Simultaneously tackling security and development is a large part of the challenge of working in environments such as Afghanistan. Yet Afghanistan is a large country with many regional variations which means that priorities and needs vary across the country. In the following chapters we examine the major issues which we think need to be addressed by the international effort in Afghanistan.

3 Donor Coordination

The Paris Declaration

47. The success of the development and reconstruction effort in Afghanistan is heavily dependent on the extent to which all donors are working towards the same objectives. The Paris Declaration of 2 March 2005 is an agreement which commits signatories to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results accompanied by a set of actions and indicators which can be used to monitor donor coordination.

48. In the Declaration there are 12 indicators of progress. The objective of aligning donor programmes with those of recipient countries is measured by the percentage of aid flows to the government sector that is reported on partners' national budgets (indicator 3). The Declaration also commits donors to seek to harmonise their approaches and where possible use programme-based approaches and to undertake shared analysis and reviews (indicators 9 and 10).⁵⁵

The Afghanistan Compact

49. The principles of good partnership enshrined in the Paris Declaration were cemented in the Afghanistan Compact signed in London in January 2006.⁵⁶ The Compact is a framework for cooperation for the five-year period up to the end of 2010. It followed implementation of the Bonn Agreement which re-established permanent government institutions in Afghanistan after the military action of 2001. At the London conference \$10.7 billion in development assistance was pledged for the five-year period.⁵⁷

50. The Compact is monitored by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) which meets about four times a year. It is co-chaired by the Afghan Government and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Compact is designed to support the implementation of the interim-Afghanistan National Development Strategy (i-ANDS) and focuses on security, governance and development goals.

51. Afghanistan received approximately \$1.5 billion in development assistance between March 2005 and March 2006.⁵⁸ We were told while we were in Afghanistan that well over 90% of the budget came from external revenue. By far the largest contributor to total Official Development Assistance (ODA) is the USA which provided \$1.34 billion in 2005. The European Commission was the second largest donor providing \$256 million and the UK provided \$220 million.⁵⁹ Total ODA for 2007–08 is expected to be much higher at \$4.3 billion of which \$1.9 billion will be channelled through the Government of Afghanistan.

55 OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, *The Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness*, www.oecd.org

56 Ev 52 [DFID]

57 Ev 52 [DFID]

58 Peace Dividend Trust, *Afghanistan Compact Procurement Monitoring Project*, April 2007, p vi.

59 DFID, *Afghanistan Development Facts*.

Impact of aid

52. The impact of development assistance is greatly reduced without effective coordination.⁶⁰ The Institute for State Effectiveness writes that:

“One of the challenges regarding aid and development in Afghanistan is proliferation of projects, funding channels, and mal-coordinated bilateral initiatives. This itself generates a coordination problem. In 2002, the UN agencies and NGOs prepared a large appeal based on hundreds of atomised projects, which failed to deliver a real dividend to the population. Rather, the Afghan population resent enormously the perceived lack of effectiveness, appropriateness and accountability in these projects.”⁶¹

Similarly ActionAid told us that:

“There is insufficient direction and support provided by the UN and JCMB, both of which are substantially under-resourced, and too little coordination between donors and the government of Afghanistan. Of all technical assistance to Afghanistan, which accounts for a quarter of all aid to the country, only one-tenth is coordinated among donors or with the government. Nor is there sufficient collaboration on project work, which inevitably leads to duplication or incoherence of activities by different donors.”⁶²

53. Coalition member states have also been criticised for failing to ensure that military, humanitarian, stabilisation and reconstruction efforts are sufficiently coordinated.⁶³ The importance of this aspect of coordination—joining up different sectors—was made evident to us in Helmand. We visited a newly built maternity teaching unit at a local hospital. The unit had been built with UK funds in July 2007. Unfortunately the building was not being used as there had been delays in organising the delivery and funding of the training. DFID reports that these problems have now been dealt with and they expect the training programme, funded by the World Bank, to start in the next few months.⁶⁴ **We look forward to receiving confirmation of the start of the maternity training programme in the unit built with UK funds in Lashkar Gah.**

54. The deficit in harmonisation between donor approaches is problematic and incompatible with commitments made in the Paris Declaration. It means that the Government of Afghanistan has to respond to the different priorities and objectives of different donors.

55. In addition to problems with harmonisation there is insufficient focus on ensuring that donor programmes are aligned with those of the Government of Afghanistan. Indicator 3 of the Paris Declaration seeks to increase the percentage of donor assistance which is

60 James Manor (ed) “A framework for assessing programme and project aid in low-income countries under stress” in *Aid that works: successful development in fragile states*, World Bank, 2007, p 43.

61 Ev 108 [Institute for State Effectiveness]

62 Ev 116 [Oxfam]

63 T. Noetzel and S. Scheipers, *Coalition Warfare in Afghanistan: burden sharing or disunity?* Chatham House, October 2007.

64 Ev 61 [DFID]

reported on the national budget. The Afghanistan Compact commits donors to channelling an increased percentage of their aid through Government channels, either directly to the budget or through trust fund mechanisms. Where this is not possible the Compact asks that donors use national rather than international partners to implement projects, increase their procurement within Afghanistan and use Afghan goods and services.⁶⁵

56. The Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE) points out that DFID together with Norway, Canada, the Netherlands, the EC and the World Bank have been exemplary in supporting Government of Afghanistan initiatives including the interim-Afghanistan National Development Strategy. According to the ISE other donors led by the UN have pushed for an alternative approach and as a result projects rather than national programmes have proliferated.⁶⁶

57. Of a total of \$4.3 billion in donor expenditure for 2007 \$1.9 billion was channelled through the core budget, of which \$500 million went to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, and \$2.4 billion was provided off-budget.⁶⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter the UK Government puts 80% of its funding through government channels of which a significant portion, £70 million in 2007, goes to the ARTF.⁶⁸ The USA, the largest donor, will put only 3% of its aid budget into the ARTF in 2007–08.⁶⁹ This means that although such assistance may be aligned with objectives set out in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, it has a much lower impact on the local economy. The Secretary of State assured us that the US did seek to align its programmes with Government of Afghanistan priorities but DFID was continuing to press the US to put more funds through Government of Afghanistan channels and was hopeful of change in this regard.⁷⁰

58. The funding of disparate projects also means that the Government of Afghanistan does not actually know what funds are coming into the country. DFID told us that there was quite a serious issue about how much control the Government of Afghanistan has over donor funding.⁷¹ ActionAid writes that, “a lot of aid money coming to the country is going through external budget. Not all donors are reporting their contributions to the Ministry of Finance thus making it difficult to know the exact amount of money coming into the country.”⁷²

59. A recent report by the Peace Dividend Trust Fund points out that funds have a much greater impact when resources are provided directly to the government compared with funds provided to NGOs or international companies to carry out projects because in the latter case donors often use foreign contractors and supplies rather than Afghan ones. **We note that, according to the Peace Dividend Trust, out of a total of US\$1.36 billion spent**

65 The Afghanistan Compact, Annex II, www.unama-afg.org

66 Ev 108 [Institute for State Effectiveness]

67 Ev 61 [DFID]

68 Ev 54 [DFID]

69 USAID, *US Assistance Briefing 2007-08*.

70 Q 137 [DFID]

71 Q 8 [DFID]

72 Ev 63 [ActionAid]

between March 2005 and March 2006 from major donors the local impact was around 31% or the equivalent of \$424 million.⁷³ Data provided by the Peace Dividend Trust for 2005 also suggests that, although US Official Development Assistance was six times as large as UK ODA, its local impact was only twice as much.⁷⁴

60. The military have the benefit of military doctrines which have been developed on an international basis over many years within NATO. There is no parallel body of agreed principles—or “doctrine”—for civilian post-war reconstruction and development. PRTs work in different ways in different parts of Afghanistan. Some have budgets of tens of millions of dollars—others hardly any resources of their own. Some donors, like the UK, put the majority of their assistance through the Afghan government, while others, like the USA, do not. The need for development assistance in post-conflict and insecure environments, which require a military presence to impose security, is not going to go away. **Development agencies need to come to international agreements among themselves about what constitutes good practice for post-war reconstruction and development in fragile states, especially when they are working in partnership with the military. The development community needs a body of agreed principles every bit as much as the military.**

61. During our visit we discussed with the World Bank its procedures for monitoring expenditure under the ARTF. In addition we were given the results of an independent review of the Fund carried out in 2005. The review found that the ARTF structure and procedures were functional and in line with best practice in post-conflict settings. The Fund is also in accordance with the Paris Declaration’s “good partnership principles” on ownership, alignment, harmonisation and mutual accountability for donor funding. Moreover it has allowed the Government of Afghanistan to provide key public services across the country.⁷⁵

62. DFID told us that it is helping to improve donor coordination by encouraging donors to help the Government develop a comprehensive Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and by working towards the development of a joint donor strategy process which aligns donor support to the ANDS.⁷⁶ As lead donor for coordination this is an important role but we were told that some donors continue to pursue pet projects.

63. The international community committed themselves to the Afghanistan Compact under which they have agreed to provide an increased proportion of their assistance through the core government budget. While DFID is exemplary in this respect, other donors are not. This means that the Government of Afghanistan does not “own” the development and reconstruction process and that the local impact of donor assistance is greatly reduced. DFID’s efforts at improving donor coordination in this regard are commendable but the results are currently unsatisfactory. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund has been shown to be effective. The use of parallel structures to deliver assistance by the US does nothing to build up Afghan capacity, and

73 Peace Dividend Trust, *Afghanistan Compact Procurement Monitoring Project*, April 2007, p vi.

74 Excluding contributions to the UN for which there are no calculations of local impact.

75 Scanteam, *Assessment: ARTF: final report*, Oslo 2005.

76 Ev 51 [DFID]

will therefore lengthen the time-period for which aid is necessary. Such policies are also contrary to Paris Declaration principles and commitments made under the Afghanistan Compact. We believe DFID should make renewed efforts to encourage the US and other donors to channel a greater proportion of their funding through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

64. When we visited the government hospital in Lashkar Gah we learnt that it provided a child immunisation service in both government and insurgent controlled areas. It treated patients from the insurgent controlled countryside as well as government controlled towns. When it trained staff, community midwives for example, some went to work in insurgent controlled areas. There are good humanitarian reasons to provide health services to all, and it doubtless helps the battle for hearts and minds in insurgent controlled areas for health services to be seen to be available from the Afghan government. It is difficult to imagine health services provided by a western government being tolerated in an insurgent controlled area. This underlines the value, wherever possible, of channelling development aid through the Afghan government. Health was the only government provided service in Helmand which we saw reaching out to insurgent held areas. **We urge the UK to use its leadership role in the Provincial Reconstruction Team to encourage donors to provide more resources to Afghan government health services in Helmand.**

A high level UN coordinator

65. In its recent report on Afghanistan the Defence Committee called on the Government to press the UN to appoint a high-profile individual responsible for coordinating the international effort.⁷⁷ The idea of a joint UN, EU and NATO coordinator has been discussed. In his statement to Parliament the Prime Minister confirmed that such an envoy would be in place by February 2008.⁷⁸

66. Recent press reports state that plans to create the role of UN super-envoy to coordinate the international effort in Afghanistan have been abandoned. Instead there will be a replacement for the existing role of UN Special Representative.⁷⁹ The Secretary of State confirmed to us that discussions were ongoing but he was optimistic that the EU, UN and NATO would better align their work in the future.⁸⁰ There was strong speculation that Lord Ashdown would be appointed as the next UN Special Representative. However he has withdrawn from the process because he felt that he did not have the full support of the President of Afghanistan. The Secretary of State told us that the UK had been unyielding in its support for increased donor coordination which an effective UN representative could bring and that the identification of a suitable candidate was therefore urgent.⁸¹

77 Defence Committee, Thirteenth Report of Session 2006-07, *UK Operations in Afghanistan*, HC 408 para 30.

78 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007

79 Daily Telegraph, 7 January 2008

80 Q 126 [DFID]

81 Oral Evidence from the Secretary of State for International Development, 31 January 2008 (on Iraq), Qs 52-53

67. We are disappointed that sufficient international momentum could not be gained for the appointment of a high level joint UN, NATO, EU coordinator for Afghanistan. Criticisms by the Afghan Government of the UK and the international community's efforts seem to be becoming more frequent. Problems of donor coordination are leading to a proliferation of disparate projects, low local impact of funding and creating a poor impression in Afghanistan about donors' lack of agreement. We believe such outcomes are harmful to the international effort in Afghanistan and may set back progress in reconstruction. If the international community will not agree the appointment of a super-envoy, ways must be found to ensure that the role of UN Special Representative is properly resourced and that the incumbent has sufficient weight in dealing with partner countries. We hope that the Government of Afghanistan can recognise the long-term benefits for them of the UN appointing a strong representative to improve coordination.

4 Improving security

Security conditions

68. Increasing insecurity and the continuing insurgency are threatening the reconstruction effort in parts of Afghanistan. ActionAid writes that, “at no time since 2001 has the security situation in the country looked so dire. Over the last year, the Taliban have regrouped, reorganised and refunded their insurgency, launching bitter battles across the southern third of Afghanistan.”⁸² Oxfam also report increasing death rates resulting from the conflict in 2007.⁸³ In June 2007 the BBC reported that:

“The Taliban have new confidence and new tactics, and their campaign against the government and its NATO backers has been increasingly successful since the beginning of this year. In the east of the country, around Jalalabad, suicide bombings have become such frequent occurrences that the road from there to Kabul is now known as the Baghdad road.”⁸⁴

69. During our visit in late October 2007 the security situation was relatively calm (although our visit programme in Helmand was altered slightly following a suicide bomb outside the Lashkar Gah bus station which killed one person). However soon after our departure Afghanistan suffered one of its worst suicide bombings to date in the northern town of Baghlan when around 70 people were killed, including five MPs and many school-children.⁸⁵ In January there was an attack on the Serena Hotel in Kabul where we stayed during our visit.⁸⁶ This is being considered as the start of a new campaign to target foreigners. The Secretary of State assured us that the incident had not affected DFID’s commitment to working in Afghanistan although it had restricted the movements of DFID and Embassy staff and may affect its ability to recruit staff for longer terms.⁸⁷

70. Some analysts have commented on the increasing reach of the insurgency,⁸⁸ and some even question whether the “war” is winnable.⁸⁹ The Prime Minister’s statement of 12 December 2007 sought directly to contradict such conclusions—“let me make it clear at the outset that as part of a coalition we are winning the battle against the Taliban insurgency.”⁹⁰ Lord Malloch-Brown, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, stated

82 Ev 63 [ActionAid]

83 Ev 124 [Oxfam]

84 “Can the war in Afghanistan be won?” bbc.co.uk/news, 17 June 2007.

85 “At least 50 dead as bomber hits MPs’ school visit,” *The Independent*, 7 November 2007; Survivors recall Baghlan bomb horror”, www.bbc.co.uk/news

86 “Taliban attack luxury Kabul Hotel” bbc.co.uk/news, 15 January 2008

87 Q 124 [DFID]

88 “Warning shots turn into lethal new development as violence drifts north,” *The Guardian*, 7 November 2007.

89 “The Taliban can lose every battle—yet still win the war”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 2007; “Britain’s Afghan mission is a fruitless and failing pursuit,” *The Guardian*, 12 December 2007.

90 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007.

that, “the Taliban do not control a single province or have the ability to hold territory, showing they are far from being a resurgent force.”⁹¹

71. Yet, despite initial coalition military success, a Taliban-led insurgency has continued to threaten security and stability in Afghanistan. Christian Aid told us that:

“the current insecurity caused by a mix of the Taliban-led insurgency, the ongoing activities of illegal militias tied to provincial warlords or factional commanders, and general criminality is having a debilitating effect on the environment for development.”⁹²

This point was echoed in our conversation with the former Finance Minister, Ashraf Ghani.

72. The security situation does, however, vary across the country. In the north and the west it is relatively peaceful and more development is possible. In the south it varies from place to place. DFID told us that “in the area round Lashkar Gah it is relatively easy to get out and see what is going on; in other parts of Helmand the security situation has been more difficult.”⁹³ However the areas of the country which are becoming more insecure have been steadily increasing according to successive UN accessibility maps.⁹⁴

73. The UK Commander of Task Force Helmand, Brigadier Andrew MacKay, told us that NATO forces were facing a classic insurgency in Afghanistan. He said the Taliban’s failure to win conventional battles had led them to start using ‘asymmetrical’ tactics such as suicide bombs and improvised explosive devices designed to spread fear, even in areas which are relatively secure. **We note the UK Commander of Taskforce Helmand’s explanation that the key objective of the military was to gain the consent of the local population and to marginalise the insurgents and starve them of their support base. We also note that most people in Afghanistan do not support the insurgency so that influence-winning activities are more important than overt military force. Cooperation and understanding between NATO forces and the Afghan Government and armed forces are crucial to success.**

74. **We would also like to pay tribute to the commitment and sacrifice being made by UK forces in this difficult environment. We were disappointed by the tone and timing of the recent criticisms made by President Karzai of UK military operations in Helmand, particularly as these concerns were not raised with us by the Government of Afghanistan during our visit. We are concerned that such comments risk undermining the support of the British people for the UK’s long-term commitment to Afghanistan.**

75. Brigadier MacKay explained that in Afghanistan “tier 1 Taliban” are regarded as the hardliners, frequently linked to Al-Qaeda, who cannot be reconciled. Many of those who are referred to as “tier 2 Taliban”, on the other hand, are often unemployed youth who will

91 Lord Malloch-Brown “Taliban no longer a credible threat,” Letter to *The Independent*, 29 November 2007.

92 Ev 96 [Christian Aid]

93 Q 20 [DFID]

94 UN Department of Safety and Security, Afghanistan Accessibility Maps; UNDSS, *Half-year Review of the Security Situation in Afghanistan*, 13 August 2007.

work for whoever is willing to pay them. This group, sometimes also referred to as the “\$10 Taliban”, was more likely to renounce violence and back the new Government.

76. The Secretary of State told us that around 5,000 former fighters had already moved back into the mainstream.⁹⁵ However without providing such individuals and their families with jobs and incomes they are likely to return to the Taliban. This highlights the need for a joined-up military, political and reconstruction effort.⁹⁶

77. Increasing insecurity and the continuing insurgency are threatening the reconstruction effort in many parts of Afghanistan. The relationship between security and development is a key determinant of success in post-conflict environments. While it is important that the NATO forces remain in Afghanistan to help provide the security which is a necessary precondition for reconstruction, it is clear to us that without tangible improvements in people’s lives the insurgency will not be defeated.

Regional security

78. UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) maps of Afghanistan reveal that security has deteriorated, particularly in the south eastern areas which border Pakistan.⁹⁷ A recent Chatham House paper states that:

“The conflict has increasingly become a regional one. Taliban bases in Pakistan cannot be targeted by coalition forces; however, logistical and armament supplies out of Pakistan are significant, and Pakistan is used as a recruitment base. As long as parts of Pakistan serve as a safe haven for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, coalition forces will not be able to control Afghanistan.”⁹⁸

79. In discussions we had in Afghanistan Dr Barnett Rubin from the Centre on International Cooperation, New York University, also highlighted the key part that Pakistan played in Afghanistan’s future. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the borderlands are controlled by neither government and are the breeding ground for Taliban recruits and a major drug trafficking route.⁹⁹ Efforts on the part of the international community to encourage more meaningful dialogue between the two countries have seen some positive outcomes, including the return of about four million Afghan refugees. Nevertheless current instability in Pakistan, exacerbated by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, creates the risk of further insecurity. The Secretary of State fully acknowledged that the security of Pakistan and Afghanistan were inter-related and that the UK would continue to monitor the border closely.¹⁰⁰

95 Q 126 [DFID]

96 David Kilcullen, “Three pillars of counterinsurgency,” remarks delivered at the US Government Counterinsurgency Conference, 28 September 2006.

97 “Aid map reveals expansion of no-go zones”, The Times, 5 December 2007.

98 Noetzel and Scheipers, *Coalition warfare in Afghanistan*, p 1.

99 Ev 126 [Oxfam]

100 Q 180 [DFID]

80. **We believe that greater international pressure should be placed on Pakistan to control more effectively the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Unless this happens the Taliban will have a steady supply of recruits and the international effort to bring stability and security to Afghanistan will be futile.**

81. There are also close ties and regular cross-border traffic between Iran and western Afghanistan which would certainly become a focus for instability in the event of military action against Iran.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the UK troop contribution

82. In December 2007 the Prime Minister announced that UK troop numbers in Afghanistan would remain at about 7,800. Afghanistan is the UK's largest single deployment and the UK troop contribution is the next largest after that of the USA. This reflects the Government's commitment to bringing security and stability to Afghanistan. **We support the Government's commitment to bringing security and stability to Afghanistan and commend the work of our armed forces there.**

83. There are approximately 41,700 NATO troops (including support elements) from 37 countries in Afghanistan under International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) command.¹⁰¹ In addition there is a US-led counter-insurgency operation, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) with a separate command structure. A Chatham House paper on Afghanistan argues that this dual command structure violates the principle of unity of command in military operations and increases the chance of operational confusion.¹⁰² The Commander of ISAF, US General Dan McNeill told us that he was not overly concerned about the two command structures since he did not believe it was currently causing problems.

84. General McNeill did however express strong concerns about the extensive use of national caveats by contributing nations which, he said, severely hampered ISAF's progress and meant that in practice troops would be needed in Afghanistan for a longer period. National caveats might for example prevent some troops from being sent to the south where insecurity is greatest. The Defence Committee commented on this in its report: "While we note the progress that has been made in reducing national caveats, we remain concerned that national caveats risk impairing the effectiveness of the ISAF mission."¹⁰³ **We support the conclusion of the Defence Committee that the excessive use of national caveats increases the risk of impairing the effectiveness of the International Security Assistance Force and will increase the length of time which NATO troops are required to be in Afghanistan. The UK Government should continue to press contributing nations to reduce these to facilitate more effective ISAF operations.**

101 www.nato.int

102 Noetzel and Scheipers, *Coalition warfare in Afghanistan*, p 3.

103 Defence Committee, Thirteenth Report of Session 2006-07, *UK operations in Afghanistan*, HC 408, para 45.

85. We saw good co-operation between civilians and the military in the Helmand PRT. The team was led by a UK diplomat who had previously worked on post-war reconstruction in the Balkans. Its members include the Deputy Commander of Taskforce Helmand and a DFID representative (see paragraph 165). **We are concerned, however, that civilian-military co-operation is weakened because UK military commanders serve only a six-month tour of duty while the civilians are in post for longer periods. We ask the Secretary of State to discuss with the Ministry of Defence the feasibility of extending UK military commanders' tours of duty in Helmand to, say, one year.**

Security Sector Reform

86. One of the key objectives of the NATO coalition in Afghanistan has been to create an effective and legitimate Afghan security sector. Unfortunately progress with this objective has not been as rapid as had been hoped. Security Sector Reform was initially undertaken by dividing responsibilities between the different coalition partners. Germany was in charge of creating an Afghan National Police Force (ANP) and the US for building up the Afghan National Army (ANA). The UK assumed the lead role in counter-narcotics, Italy for reforming the legal system and Japan for disarmament, demilitarization and reintegration. Some commentators argue that this approach, while theoretically sound, did not work in practice, not least because the pillars are all interlinked and lack of progress in one area would impact on the others.¹⁰⁴

The Afghan National Army (ANA)

87. In Afghanistan we were told that the Afghan National Army was making good progress but that it was still three to four years from being capable of independent military operations at brigade level and even then it would need the international community to retain an 'overwatch' responsibility (providing logistical and medical support and operational back-up). The Army is currently being trained and mentored by NATO forces. The aim was to create a force of about 70,000–80,000 and they are about halfway there. Afghan troops were reported as having played a significant role in the retaking of the town of Musa Qala from the Taliban in December 2007 alongside NATO forces¹⁰⁵ **There has been significant progress in the building up of an effective Afghan National Army. There is still some way to go before it is a fully capable force and we commend the role played by the UK to date in training and mentoring.**

The Afghan National Police (ANP)

88. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) told us that the Afghan National Police were still five to six years away from being an effective force which has the trust of the Afghan people. The intention is to have a force of about 82,000 and currently there are 50,000.¹⁰⁶ Many people told us that the police were corrupt and that top positions could be

104 Ev 97 [ActionAid]

105 "Brigadier strides into battle against Taliban", The Times, 17 December 2007.

106 Q 24 [DFID]

bought in strategic areas. The Head of the Afghan Drug Inter-Departmental Unit, Mr Holland, told us that,

“particularly in the south one sees real anxieties about the way the police behave. The police are perceived to be part of the problem as well as the solution [...] Until people have confidence in the police they will not be able to fulfil their role.”¹⁰⁷

Corruption was partly attributed to low pay. In addition drug use amongst the police was reportedly extensive. One obstacle to rooting out corruption is the lack of political will within the Government of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Interior is, according to the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) report, “corrupt, factionalised and criminalised”. Without reform of the Ministry of Interior, donor contributions to police reform are likely to be wasted.¹⁰⁸

89. A key problem is the lack of police trainers. While military duty requires and anticipates service overseas, it is difficult to release senior police officers from their jobs to train police officers in other countries. We were told that “the quality [of Afghan police officers] varies but there are consistent problems in terms of both levels of training received and capability. That is particularly true in the most insecure areas in the south.”¹⁰⁹ The majority of training is carried out by a US company, DynCorp, which has about 500 police trainers and mentors in Afghanistan. Mr Holland told us that the US has recently carried out a review of its training programme:

“It recognises that more needs to be done. Essentially, it is looking at it on a district-by-district basis, taking the police out of the districts for some intensive training over a two-month period to sort out the problems and then putting them back into the community and mentoring them intensively over the next few months to ensure much better quality.”¹¹⁰

90. According to an Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit paper there is a fundamental difference between the “German vision” of the police as a civilian law and order force and the “US vision” of the police as a security force with a major counter-insurgency role. The Secretary of State agreed that these two visions need to be reconciled and consensus reached on how to meet the policing needs in Afghanistan.¹¹¹

91. Progress in creating an effective and legitimate Afghan National Police force has been slow. Corruption and bribery are rife and this is hampering acceptance of the police as a force for good. There are insufficient police trainers and there is no clear consensus about what type of police force—paramilitary or civilian—is required. We believe that the issue of remit must be clarified as quickly as possible.

107 Q 26 [Mr Holland]

108 Andrew Wilder, *Cops or Robbers? The Struggle to Reform the ANP*, AREU, July 2007.

109 Q 24 [Mr Holland]

110 Q 24 [Mr Holland]

111 Q 166 [DFID]

The EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL)

92. From 2002 to 2007 the Germans were responsible for coordinating international support for the Afghan National Police (ANP) as the lead donor in this sector. In 2007 Germany's lead role was subsumed within a newly established EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL). The intention is for the mission to be fully operational by March 2008 and to comprise 190 EU police officers but there are concerns about the slow start-up pace of the EU mission, again mainly due to the difficulty in finding sufficient police trainers and mentors. The Secretary of State told us there were also problems with procurement of security equipment and a lack of effective leadership. He said that the UK was determined, while respectful of others' roles, to have a key role in EUPOL looking forward.¹¹²

Women police officers

93. AREU also points out that not enough has been done to ensure that there are sufficient female police officers. Of the 63,000¹¹³ police being paid salaries in 2006 only 180 were women.¹¹⁴ This is especially important in Afghanistan where women and men are often segregated and it is culturally inappropriate for a male police officer to interrogate or search a woman. Provision of more female police would help to ensure that domestic crime against women does not go unrecorded and that women are not imprisoned unlawfully. According to AREU:

“most women would be reluctant to go to an all-male police station to seek assistance or protection, or to file a criminal case—especially if their problems relate to sensitive topics such as rape, domestic violence or forced marriage.”¹¹⁵

The Ministry of the Interior has facilitated a US initiative to create a women's police force. This is a step in the right direction. The German government had previously built a women's only dormitory for training purposes but was unable to fill it because women are either not permitted or are unwilling to join the police force.

94. We believe that the new EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) is a step in the right direction in that it makes policing a shared EU responsibility. However we are disappointed that progress has been so slow. This mission should ensure that the recruitment, training and retention of female police officers is given appropriate priority within the overall imperative of building an efficient and effective police force.

Community defence initiatives

95. In his statement to Parliament the Prime Minister suggested that one way forward for policing was to “increase our support for community defence initiatives where local volunteers are recruited to defend homes and families.”¹¹⁶ In response to our questions

112 Q 165 [DFID]

113 The exact number of police in Afghanistan is not known. It is likely that salary payments are based on the number of authorised police positions rather than the actual number of police, which DFID told us was 50,000.

114 Andrew Wilder, *Cops or Robbers?* p 9.

115 *Ibid*

116 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007.

about this initiative the Secretary of State said that the Government would not be paying for arms for this force. He said it was simply a small-scale pilot project which would seek to use existing community leaders in a more organised fashion, based on a traditional form of self-defence, *Arbakai*, to help maintain security.¹¹⁷ Reports suggest that the US general in charge of training the Afghan police has expressed reservations about the project which risks arming local militias.¹¹⁸ Efforts since 2006 to create an auxiliary police force in Afghanistan have been problematic.¹¹⁹

96. We have reservations about the suggestion of arming local communities to defend themselves. While we accept that there are many people who already have weapons, we believe that it is important that donors do not encourage or exacerbate factionalism and tribalism.

The justice sector

97. Reform of the justice sector has also been slow. A reformed justice sector would be less vulnerable to corruption and more capable of tackling corruption in other sectors. Afghanaid told us there is a definite lack of faith in the justice system and this is reflected in the latest human rights report on Afghanistan by UNDP.¹²⁰ In Afghanistan we were told by ISAF that creating rule of law and a functioning justice system would take time. There were only 1,500 prosecutors, many of whom were not properly educated and their pay was so low that they were often open to bribery. Christian Aid and other NGOs have expressed concerns about the balance in donor funding between the police and army and the justice sector:

“A proper balance also needs to be found between spending in these sectors [army and police] and other, currently under-funded areas, such as the justice sector and agriculture. An example of the existing problems in the criminal justice system was illustrated by a recent survey undertaken by a Christian Aid partner on the issue of domestic violence in western Afghanistan. In only 10% of cases of chronic domestic violence had women sought help from the police and the courts.”¹²¹

98. Particular concerns have also been raised about the ability of the justice sector to defend the rights of women and children, who make up the majority of the population, despite the fact that Afghanistan has signed a number of international covenants committing it to the equal treatment of women. For example BAAG writes that:

“Despite much progress in the area of human rights, such as the establishment of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Committee (AIHRC), evidence shows that the situation for women and girls in Afghanistan, in terms of their access to justice, continues to remain extremely limited.”¹²²

117 Q 175 [DFID]. *Arbakai* is limited mainly to the south-east of Afghanistan.

118 US attacks UK plan to arm Afghan militias, *The Independent*, 14 January 2008.

119 Andrew Wilder, *Cops or Robbers?* p 15.

120 Q 102 [Afghanaid]

121 Ev 97 [Christian Aid]

122 Ev 83 [BAAG]

According to AREU:

“The majority of women in Afghanistan’s prisons are incarcerated for allegedly having committed “moral crimes”, such as prostitution, adultery, or simply running away from their homes or husbands. According to one report, 56 percent of the women in Kabul prisons in 2005 were detained for “moral crimes”. Running away is not codified as an offence in the formal justice system, yet according to one study, 20 of the 80 women in Kabul’s Pul-i-Charkhi prison were accused or convicted of running away from home, with prison terms ranging from 6 months to 14 years imprisonment. It is very often the girls and women who run away to escape domestic violence or forced marriages that are prosecuted, while the perpetrators of violence escape prosecution.”¹²³

Similarly the NGO Gender Action for Peace and Security reports:

“there is little access to justice for women in Afghanistan, they are poorly represented within the police and formal justice sector institutions, they have little representation in the informal or traditional dispute resolution mechanisms and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs operates at a low capacity and with minimal influence on government policy.”¹²⁴

99. The lack of a functioning state justice sector means that Afghans are resorting to traditional justice mechanisms. The Secretary of State confirmed that 80% of justice was still delivered through informal systems.¹²⁵ This is problematic for women as aspects of traditional law discriminate against women and children. The President of Afghanistan told us that there was a need for a national approach to justice rather than the current dual system. While some progress had been made, for example in the creation of a supreme court and a high court as well as district courts, a fully functioning state justice system would take years to establish. We discussed the issue with the Secretary of State who felt that this was an issue which had to be worked out with the Government of Afghanistan and could not be imposed by donors.¹²⁶ The UK Government has contributed £2 million to reform of the justice sector.¹²⁷

100. Violence against women is still pervasive and without a functioning formal justice sector threatens to set back progress made thus far in the realisation of women’s rights. A key part of protecting women’s rights is ensuring they have proper access to justice. Funding for the justice sector is disproportionately low and we believe its reform should now be a priority for donors and for the Government of Afghanistan. We recommend that the UK Government play its part in this through increased funding for the justice sector from the Stabilisation Aid Fund. We accept that changing the values of society is a long-term process; however, we reiterate that the Government of Afghanistan should seek to honour its commitments to international human rights law

123 Andrew Wilder, *Cops or Robbers?* p 10.

124 Ev 103 [GAPS]

125 Q 170 [DFID]

126 Q 171 [DFID]

127 Q 168 [DFID]

in respect of women. Consideration should also be given to inviting Islamic countries to advise the Government of Afghanistan on establishing a justice system that would meet the needs of women, children and minorities and protect their fundamental human rights.

5 Governance and sub-national governance

101. The creation of an effective state is one of the three objectives of DFID’s programme in Afghanistan.¹²⁸ To this end DFID has directed 80% of its funds through the Government of Afghanistan because it argues that, “this helps the Government to develop the capacity to deliver basic services; to manage public finances effectively; and to build credibility and legitimacy with the Afghan people. It is also more cost effective.”¹²⁹

102. The main financing instrument used by DFID is the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund. As discussed in chapter 2 this includes a “recurrent window” and an “investment window”. While the former is mainly used for public sector salaries, the latter is used for a number of Government of Afghanistan National Priority Programmes. These include the National Solidarity Programme which supports the Community Development Councils (see section on sub-national governance below).

103. When we were in Afghanistan, DFID told us that since 2001 international attention has focused on developing a strong central state on the assumption that it would then extend its influence and legitimacy throughout the rest of the country. This has not happened and the lack of service delivery and accountability at the sub-national level has created a vacuum which if not addressed will undermine the Government’s ability to assert its authority across Afghanistan.

Sub-national governance

104. For administrative purposes Afghanistan is divided into 34 provinces which provide the top layer of sub-national governance and administration. Below the province are the district level, the municipal level and the village level.

105. Evidence from Oxfam states that the reach of the central government has not extended into many rural areas and that for many people in these areas the quality of life has not improved significantly. According to Oxfam, “the development process has not sufficiently benefited the majority of the population who live in rural areas, where essential services, such as water or electricity, remain scarce or insufficient.”¹³⁰ Oxfam also suggests that:

“urgent action is required to promote comprehensive rural development, where progress has been slow, through building local government to deliver essential services, reforming sub-national governance, and channelling more resources directly to communities.”¹³¹

For example:

128 Ev 50 [DFID]

129 Ev 50 [DFID]

130 Ev 118 [Oxfam]

131 Ev 114 [Oxfam]

“Line ministries are over-centralised and dominate resource allocation, management and planning from Kabul. Provincial line departments have limited autonomy and are subject to interventions by Governors' Offices which creates operational problems and deters the de-concentration of resources. In villages and districts government is either non-existent or weak and ineffective having limited capabilities and profoundly inadequate human and financial resources. There has been very little donor or government activity to build institutional capacity at district and provincial level, and no such efforts with national coverage.”¹³²

106. In June 2007 the World Bank published a report on sub-national governance which outlined a number of problems with the existing structure.¹³³ These included systemic contradictions between the responsibilities of Provincial Line Ministries and the powers of the Provincial Governor to intervene in a way which “blurs and undermines accountability and creates significant operational difficulties.”¹³⁴ This issue was raised with us, and the ramifications of it became apparent, on our visit to Helmand Province.

107. The report also highlighted that the current system was unresponsive to local requirements and produced inequitable outcomes and that Municipal Councils faced a problem of legitimacy because they were unelected. Community Development Councils on the other hand did enjoy legitimacy but their funding base, and indeed their future existence, was uncertain. In addition low capacity, shortages of equipment, and the lack of infrastructure, characteristics unexceptional in post-conflict states, exacerbated structural problems.

The Independent Directorate for Local Governance

108. The Government of Afghanistan's response to the World Bank report was to create an Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) reporting directly to the President and with supervisory responsibility at the provincial level. The IDLG was launched in September 2007.

109. On our visit we met with the head of the IDLG, Minister Jelani Popal, who explained to us his strategic plans. The goals for the Directorate include establishing and strengthening institutions at the sub-national level which are open, transparent and accountable and which ensure people's participation; to eliminate discrimination against women and promote their involvement in leadership; and the fight against corruption in the public sector.¹³⁵

132 Ev 118 [Oxfam]

133 World Bank, *Service Delivery and Governance at the sub-national level in Afghanistan*, July 2007

134 *Ibid*, p vii

135 Independent Directorate of Local Governance, *Strategic Framework*, September 2007

110. In addition the IDLG has proposed a range of launch activities which are designed to demonstrate the Government's capacity in security and service delivery at the sub-national level. These include the setting up of community defence initiatives discussed in the previous chapter.¹³⁶

111. In his statement to Parliament the Prime Minister announced UK support for two new programmes in support of local governance from existing funds. The first of these will include building up the capacity of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance.¹³⁷ DFID will provide £1.5 million to the IDLG in 2007–08.¹³⁸

112. The Government of Afghanistan has recognised the need to address sub-national governance and to make the existing system work better. To this end the Independent Directorate for Local Governance has been established and has set out for itself an ambitious programme. We believe that clarification of the role of provincial governors and the establishment of local tax-raising powers should be a priority. We welcome the allocation of £1.5 million of DFID funding to support the work of the IDLG.

Community Development Councils

113. Unfortunately the IDLG strategic framework does not discuss the future of Community Development Councils (CDCs) and the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Instead government involvement in CDCs has been through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. ActionAid expressed their disappointment that soon after the creation of the IDLG an opportunity to engage with CDCs was missed when the Minister did not attend a meeting to discuss their future:

“Three hundred delegates are sitting there to discuss and make recommendations on how CDCs should function. Everybody—donors and civil society organisations—is there, but we learned that the independent commission on local governance was reluctant to participate, thinking that that would give legitimacy to the recommendations that came out of it and that might not fulfil its expectations. Their participation in organising the national consultation process was also missing. It has been driven very much by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.”¹³⁹

114. The National Solidarity programme (NSP) was set up to strengthen local participation in decision-making about development. Through the NSP, Community Development Councils have been established in all 34 provinces. These are representative decision-making bodies but they are not formally recognised in the constitution. The NSP provides grants to the CDCs for projects decided upon by the Councils in collaboration with UN Habitat and 23 local NGOs.¹⁴⁰ ActionAid's evidence describes how CDCs work with NGOs:

136 Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Communities Self-Defence Programme.

137 HC Deb, Col 303-307, 12 December 2007

138 Q 161 [DFID]

139 Q 107 [ActionAid]

140 Ev 50 [DFID]

“ActionAid has been facilitating implementation of the NSP since 2004, and last year its contract budget was US\$1.4 million. Currently ActionAid works in 298 communities establishing community development councils, facilitating the elaboration of Village Development Plans, supporting the communities in problem prioritisation and developing sub-project proposals. The communities then submit these proposals to the government for approval and NGOs facilitate the implementation of these projects.”¹⁴¹

115. On our visit we met with members of CDCs in Balkh province and Kabul. We also saw examples of projects which CDCs had chosen to fund, often in collaboration with other CDCs. These included water projects and schools as well as community centres for hosting village *shuras* (councils). Oxfam told us that:

“The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) has succeeded in channelling resources directly to elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) representing over 25,000 villages, over 70% of Afghanistan's communities. Through the Programme NGO assistance is provided for community-directed development projects, for example water supply or school construction, and there have been several positive assessments of the Programme in terms of project implementation, governance and stabilisation.”¹⁴²

116. The fact that Community Development Councils are present in every province and over 25,000 villages is a significant achievement. In rural areas in particular CDCs provide a vehicle for small community-led development projects which strengthen local communities and help to provide important infrastructure and local services which might not otherwise exist. In chapter 7 we discuss the importance of rural development as part of the counter-narcotics effort.

117. Community Development Councils have not been without problems. NGOs have complained that their funding has been erratic and that there have been long delays between decisions about which projects to fund and the dispersal of funds.¹⁴³ Afghanaid told us about some of the difficulties it was experiencing:

“What we are disappointed and worried about is the fact that NSP funding as such for the whole programme is always unpredictable. As we speak today, there is an anticipation of a shortfall of something like \$200 million in March next year. There are constant cash flow problems. For example, between April and September of this year Afghanaid has been paying staff out of its own reserves. There was a six-month delay in receiving the payment for the work.”¹⁴⁴

118. In the creation of the CDCs much emphasis has been placed on ensuring fair representation, especially of women and other marginalised groups. Afghanaid writes that “the National Solidarity Programme requires the establishment of Community Development Councils with equal participation of women, it also requires that female

141 Ev 66 [ActionAid]

142 Ev 118 [Oxfam]

143 Ev 64, 68 [ActionAid; Afghanaid]

144 Q 80 [Afghanaid]

CDC members plan, implement and manage at least 1 sub-project proposed under NSP.”¹⁴⁵ We witnessed for ourselves the positive impact of women’s involvement in CDCs. But the future of CDCs in sub-national governance structures remains undecided. ActionAid told us that:

“There is no coherence at government level which makes things quite ambiguous at village level where people are not clear whether CDCs will or will not stay. Their performance also varies depending on the quality of facilitation and the time NGOs can spend working with them. There is a definite recognition that they are an important institution. A lot of money has been invested and capacity developed in those institutions. One should not let go of CDCs; as a project of NSP they should be taken forward.”¹⁴⁶

119. Community Development Councils have created elected forums for inclusive community level decision-making. Communities have been empowered and linkages established between neighbourhoods. Funding from the National Solidarity Programme has enabled CDCs to identify needs and acquire funding for specific community priority projects which deliver basic services. Such developments are important for creating an active and engaged civil society. CDCs have also been effective in encouraging the proper involvement of women in local decision-making.

120. Concerns have been raised about the future of Community Development Councils as the future of their funding mechanism, the National Solidarity Programme, is itself uncertain. We consider that the tangible benefits of CDCs are significant. Decisions about future NSP funds need to be made before current funding expires. Community Development Councils have enabled valuable community level decision-making in a context where the rest of government is highly centralized. Given the limited reach of central government and the need for rural development as part of the counter-narcotics effort, we recommend that the UK Government actively encourage the continuation and formalisation of CDCs in the medium term recognising it will require a significant share of the limited funds under Government of Afghanistan control.

145 Ev 67 [Afghanaid]

146 Q 106 [ActionAid]

6 Narcotics and counter-narcotics

Opium poppy production

121. In 2007 Afghanistan's net opium poppy cultivation increased to 193,000 hectares—an increase of 17% over 2006 according to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime.¹⁴⁷ The total area under cultivation as a percentage of agricultural land increased from 3.65% to 4.27%. Afghanistan as a whole now produces 93% of the world opium supply, up from 92% in 2006 (see Table 1). However regionally there are significant disparities in cultivation. There are now thirteen poppy-free provinces, in the north and the centre, up from six last year.¹⁴⁸ Decreases in these provinces are coupled with increases in others. Helmand Province alone is responsible for 50% of Afghanistan's cultivation according to the UNODC.¹⁴⁹

Table 1: 2007 Annual Opium Poppy Survey in Afghanistan

	2006	2007	% change 2006-07
Net opium poppy cultivation	165,000ha ¹	193,000ha	+17%
As a percentage of agricultural land	3.65%	4.27%	
Number of provinces affected	28	21	
Number of poppy free provinces	6	13	
Eradication	15,300ha	19,047ha	+24%
Potential production of opium	6,100mt ²	8,200mt	+34%
As a percentage of global production	92%	93%	
Number of persons involved in opium cultivation	2.9 million	3.3 million	+14%
As a percentage of total population (23 million)	12.6%	14.3%	

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007, Executive Summary, August 2007*.

Key: ¹ hectares ² metric tons

147 UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*, p iv.

148 Ev 57 [DFID]

149 UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007* p iv.

122. These regional disparities reflect and are intricately linked to the level of security in the provinces. DFID told us that “opium production is heavily concentrated in areas of insecurity with Helmand now the world's biggest source of illicit drugs.”¹⁵⁰ The link between opium production and insecurity means that until provinces such as Helmand become more secure, opium poppy production is unlikely to decrease significantly. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan told us that the situation in terms of poppy production was unlikely to change dramatically in the next few years. New research funded by DFID and the World Bank on alternatives to opium poppy production also states that “there should be no illusions about the prospects for quick success against opium, particularly if conflict and insecurity continue in many parts of the country.”¹⁵¹

123. The share of the economy represented by opium fluctuates depending on the price of opiates and the growth rates of the licit economy. The DFID-World Bank study estimates that the size of the drug sector relative to GDP decreased from 62% to 38% between 2002 and 2006 mainly due to growth in the licit economy.¹⁵² In addition there is currently an oversupply of opium on the market which has caused prices to fall. However the study also comments that, despite its decreasing contribution to the overall economy, opium poppy production was contributing significantly to corruption:

“The sheer size and illicit nature of the opium economy mean that it infiltrates and seriously affects Afghanistan's economy, state, society, and politics. The opium economy is a massive source of corruption and gravely undermines the credibility of the government and its local representatives.”¹⁵³

124. Thus opium poppy cultivation is both a result of, and a causal factor in, insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. It was suggested to us that the narcotics industry was both condoned and controlled by elements in the establishment. **Opium poppy production is causally linked to insecurity and corruption in Afghanistan. Suggestions of the involvement in narcotics of high-ranking officials are worrying. We believe greater effort on the part of the President and donors is essential to ensure that involvement in opium poppy production is stamped out at every level of government.**

125. Opium poppy production flourishes in insecure areas because the market functions and indeed thrives in such conditions. Poppy traders often offer credit to poor farmers or purchase their crop in advance thus ensuring a reliable income. In addition traders may collect the crop directly from the farmers so that they do not have to pay the check-point and road-side bribes or face the insecurities of open and dangerous roads.¹⁵⁴ Poppy is thus a low-risk crop in a high-risk environment.¹⁵⁵ While other crops, such as mint or saffron,

150 Ev 50 [DFID]

151 Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007, p 1.

152 World Bank, *Economic Incentives to reduce opium production in Afghanistan*, Unpublished draft chapter.

153 World Bank, *Afghanistan: Drug Industry and Counter-Narcotics policy*, November 2006.

154 Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007, p 3.

155 D. Mansfield, *Evidence from the field: Understanding changing levels of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan*, AREU, November 2007, p 2.

may offer greater returns per acre, the sustainability of such alternatives depends on replicating what drug traders are able to offer.

126. Poppy cultivation is the main source of income for about 14% of the population.¹⁵⁶ The DFID-World Bank study identifies four types of poppy farmers: the better-off farmers who have diversified livelihood strategies, often live near provincial and district centres and are not dependent on poppy for a decent living; the less affluent farmers who have limited access to markets, land and water but also some alternative sources of income; poor and highly dependent farmers with small landholdings, living in remote areas with very limited alternative income potential; and landless sharecroppers who hire out their labour and are very dependent on poppy cultivation.¹⁵⁷ The report argues that the first category is composed of opportunistic farmers who should be subject to counter-narcotics measures. The others should be the target of development interventions.

127. Opium poppy production is also a source of income for the Taliban although it is difficult to quantify this with any accuracy since those involved have strong incentives to conceal their income sources. In addition distinguishing between Taliban insurgents, drugs traffickers and others opposed to foreign presence is difficult. The UNODC thinks that in recent months the Taliban have become more reliant on the drug economy.¹⁵⁸ The ISAF Commander estimated that the Taliban relied on the opium economy for 20 to 40 per cent of their income. In evidence to us David Mansfield, an independent researcher and consultant, accepted that this was plausible but warned that the Taliban were unlikely to disappear even if Afghanistan became poppy-free since they had other sources of income.¹⁵⁹

128. It is also important to recognise the growing problem local use of poppy is creating for the population. Children involved in the harvest, through their contact with the crop, develop an addiction. In addition, in the absence of readily available alternative medication, it is often used as an analgesic and even to tackle teething problems in babies.

Counter-narcotics policy

129. The goal of the Afghan National Drugs Control Strategy (ANDCS) is to secure a sustainable decrease in the cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs with a view to complete elimination.¹⁶⁰ The Strategy identifies four priorities:

- Targeting traffickers;
- Strengthening and diversifying legal livelihoods;
- Developing state institutions; and,
- Reducing demand for illicit drugs.

¹⁵⁶ UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*, p 10

¹⁵⁷ Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007.

¹⁵⁸ UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*, p v.

¹⁵⁹ Q 69 [Mr Mansfield]

¹⁶⁰ Ev 57 [DFID]

David Mansfield commented that while all the policy objectives were sound and in line with good practice, there were questions about the sequencing and prioritising of goals and doubts about the ability of the line ministries of the Government of Afghanistan to implement the policy.¹⁶¹

130. The UK Government supports the ANDCS. Its Afghan Inter-Departmental Drugs Unit, and the British Embassy Drugs Team based in Kabul are responsible for coordinating UK support to the ANDCS which focuses on the first three of the Strategy's objectives.

Drug trafficking

131. An effective counter-narcotics policy will need to tackle the traders of opium. Intercepting the opium trade (interdiction) in Afghanistan is made extremely difficult by porous borders. According to the Government of Afghanistan there are at least 167 unofficial border crossings between Afghanistan and its neighbours.¹⁶² Oxfam told us that “there is extensive trafficking of opium and heroin across Afghanistan's northern and southern borders, including several thousand tonnes of precursor chemicals, required for refining opium, across the southern border every year.”¹⁶³ **A key part of any counter-narcotics policy is tackling the traders of opium. Controlling drug trafficking between Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular requires, as a necessary condition, greater knowledge of and control over the borderlands and assistance from the Government of Pakistan.**

Crop eradication

132. The main forms of intervention in the cultivation and production of opium poppy in Afghanistan have been crop eradication—often implemented after banning production—and the encouragement of alternative livelihoods. Crop eradication is seen by some as counter-productive, especially in insecure provinces, because it can alienate the very population you are trying to win over by removing their livelihood without offering anything in return.¹⁶⁴ Crop eradication can take place either by ground eradication or aerial spraying. The UK supports the Government of Afghanistan policy that aerial spraying of poppies should not be permitted. Aerial spraying has been suggested by the US as the most efficient way of eradicating poppy as land-based eradication is slow and often dangerous. However the Government of Afghanistan's view is that aerial spraying will simply push poor farmers into the hands of the Taliban and in addition is thought to be potentially harmful to water supplies and to other crops. **We agree with the UK and Afghan Governments that aerial spraying of poppies is not desirable for health and safety reasons and because it risks increasing insecurity in already insecure provinces.**

133. General McNeill, the ISAF commander, described some of the problems with eradication. If a farmer was told that 50% of his field was going to be destroyed, he would simply plant 50% more poppy. In addition it has been found that eradication in 2007

161 Q 55 [Mr Mansfield]

162 UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*, p 21.

163 Ev 126 [Oxfam]

164 Q 63 [Mr Mansfield]

mainly destroyed marginal fields and that deals are often struck between the village elders and eradication teams which result in the poorest farmers being targeted.¹⁶⁵ More significantly, in some provinces where poppy production was banned and eradication was carried out, poppy cultivation has since returned and production increased.¹⁶⁶ The province of Nangahar, for example, which had previously seen a 96% decrease in poppy production in 2004–05 saw its area under production increase by 285% in 2006–07.¹⁶⁷ David Mansfield noted that some of those involved in opium poppy production in Nangahar had moved to Balkh province as casual labourers when the ban was enforced, thus shifting the problem elsewhere. Balkh province was declared poppy-free in 2006–07, but there are concerns that this reduction is not sustainable.¹⁶⁸

134. Wide-scale eradication has not contributed to a sustainable reduction in poppy cultivation in many provinces. We believe that while eradication has a legitimate role, for example in targeting large landowners, an excessive focus on it and on reducing acreage under poppy cultivation has been at the expense of the creation of qualitative changes in rural livelihood opportunities.

Alternative livelihoods

135. The majority of farmers (98%) in a UNODC survey reported that they would be ready to stop poppy cultivation if access to alternative livelihoods was available.¹⁶⁹ There are many different approaches to alternative livelihoods in Afghanistan. Traditionally these have focused on discrete projects designed to replace the poppy with an alternative crop. The assumption has been that once this alternative crop was available, poppy production would cease. However such approaches fail to take account of the complexity of poppy production in Afghanistan.

136. David Mansfield explains that opium poppy cultivation plays a multifunctional role in rural Afghan households. Farmers rarely rely on poppy as their only crop but it is one which they may or may not plant depending on the price of other commodities, the availability of off-farm income or promises of development assistance.¹⁷⁰ Development agencies are rarely able to generate sufficient economic activity over a single growing season to prevent farmers from reverting to poppy production.

137. When we were in Afghanistan DFID told us that on-going research on economic incentives for alternative livelihoods found that offering subsidies to farmers was too expensive and not sustainable; access to markets was crucial; and focusing only on alternative crops was not sufficient—other non-farm alternatives such as taxi-driving, small businesses and agricultural processing, which all offered potentially higher incomes and greater security, were needed.

165 UNODC, *Opium Survey 2007*, p v.

166 Q 53 [Mr Mansfield]

167 UNODC, *Opium Survey 2007*, p 6.

168 Q 52 [Mr Mansfield]

169 UNODC, *Opium Survey 2007* p 15.

170 D. Mansfield, *Evidence from the field: Understanding changing levels of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan*, AREU, November 2007, p 2.

138. A different approach is emerging which seeks to mainstream counter-narcotics into broader development policy. This involves moving away from small local projects and adjusting the focus of development programmes so that they take account of the impact of interventions in different sectors on opium poppy production.¹⁷¹ Thus alternative livelihoods would become a more integrated and holistic approach to rural livelihoods.¹⁷²

139. The increase in opium poppy cultivation is directly linked to continuing insecurity in many parts of Afghanistan. Insecurity prevents the development of alternative and sustainable income sources. Poppy cultivation can be an attractive choice in a high-risk environment, especially for poor farmers. We believe that expectations that poppy cultivation will be reduced over a short period are misplaced. Given the heavy reliance on poppy cultivation for household income, any enforced dramatic reduction would have significant negative social, political and economic consequences. We welcome the shift in thinking towards a more holistic and integrated approach to alternatives. We commend the World Bank and DFID for their commitment to undertake research and reformulate policies based on evidence.

The Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund

140. As part of the effort to encourage alternative livelihoods the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) was created alongside the ARTF. However it has been slow to disburse funding. In Afghanistan we were told that only \$3.4 million had been spent out of a total of \$82.9 million which had been pledged. The CNTF is managed by the Minister of Counter-Narcotics and a donor team led by the United Nations Development Programme. Strong criticism of the operation of the CNTF and the difficulties in trying to access funds was made by Afghanaid.¹⁷³ A review of the CNTF in September 2007 found that it was overly centralised and bureaucratic. Concerns were also expressed about the capacity of the relevant line ministries, especially the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics. The review found that, while capacity of ministries needed to be built up, the Fund also needed to devolve more decision-making to the provinces.¹⁷⁴ It also noted that there was a lack of clarity about what type of projects the CNTF should fund. There had been a focus on infrastructure including roads. At ISAF headquarters we were told that one of the unintended consequences of road-building initiatives had been to facilitate the narcotics trade. **We are disappointed that the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund has not been more successful in its efforts thus far. Given research findings on the need to include a counter-narcotics perspective in all development programmes, consideration should be given to whether a separate counter-narcotics fund is the appropriate mechanism for driving this forward.**

171 Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007.

172 Q176 [DFID]

173 Ev 70-72 [Afghanaid]

174 Middlebrook and Miller, *Review of the Counter-narcotics Trust Fund*, September 2007.

7 Rural livelihoods

141. Kabul is a thriving, bustling city—we saw for ourselves that the markets are busy and stalls are filled with goods; traffic is congested, especially at peak hours; schools are open; wedding halls, bathhouses and mosques line the roadsides and the streets are full of men, women and children going about their daily business. Mazar-e-Sharif is an equally busy city with all the normal evidence of flourishing trade and economic activity. In many rural areas of Afghanistan, however, economic activity is not as apparent. On our visit we drove around and outside Lashkar Gah—there were few cars on the roads, instead there were tractors, donkeys and camels; crops were growing in the fields but irrigation and drainage were lacking.

142. Promoting rural development should be a key part of alternative livelihoods programmes. Yet NGOs have expressed strong concerns that support for state building has meant that rural development, and in particular agriculture, has been neglected.¹⁷⁵ Oxfam told us that:

“While aid has undoubtedly contributed to progress in Afghanistan, especially in social and economic infrastructure, the development process has not sufficiently benefited the majority of the population who live in rural areas, where essential services, such as water or electricity, remain scarce or insufficient.”¹⁷⁶

143. In part this is related to the failure of central government adequately to devolve resources and decision-making powers down to provincial structures, and insufficient and insecure funding for those sub-national structures which have been most effective—namely the Community Development Councils (discussed in chapter 5). It is also the case that donor support to the agricultural sector has been modest. Oxfam estimate that donors have spent only US\$270 million directly on agricultural projects over the last six years.¹⁷⁷

DFID’s livelihoods programme

144. One of DFID’s core areas of activity is improving the livelihoods of local people. DFID’s funding in this area supports Government of Afghanistan programmes including:

- The National Solidarity Programme (discussed in chapter 5)
- The Microfinance Investment and Support Facility for Afghanistan
- The National Rural Access Programme which mainly funds road-building
- The Horticulture and Livelihoods Programme to improve incentives for private investment, and strengthen institutional capacity, in key agricultural sectors.¹⁷⁸

175 Ev 81 [BAAG]

176 Ev 118 [Oxfam]

177 Ev 120 [Oxfam]

178 Ev 58 [DFID]

In addition to funding these programmes at a national level, DFID funds the Helmand elements of these programmes and the Helmand Agriculture and Rural Development Programme which has financed the construction of over 550 wells, and the rehabilitation of 40 kilometres of rural roads.¹⁷⁹

Priority areas

145. The DFID-World Bank study identifies four areas which have the most potential to shift economic incentives away from opium and toward the legal economy: agriculture, irrigation and livestock; rural enterprise development; rural infrastructure; and local governance.¹⁸⁰ This section provides some evidence of the relevance of the first two of these in particular.

146. BAAG supports the Government of Afghanistan livelihoods programmes but expresses strong concern that there is not enough donor focus on agriculture:

“support for the backbone of the rural economy (agriculture) is covered in a very piecemeal and inadequate fashion because the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) currently has very little capacity to provide the outreach and extension needed. As a percentage of DFID's portfolio, support to agriculture features hardly at all. That is regrettable, since support in that sector (and related off-farm enterprise development) is essential for helping rural communities meet basic needs, and thus become more stable and less prone to succumb to illicit activities. Sufficient support for a range of social protection and safety net measures is also necessary to alleviate wide-spread food insecurity that is still very prevalent, particularly in more remote and inaccessible areas.”¹⁸¹

147. We were told that the Ministry of Agriculture was not as effective as it should be.¹⁸² Oxfam reports that in Daikundi province the Department of Agriculture has a staff of 16, only two of whom have relevant qualifications, and no funding for projects.¹⁸³ Most of DFID's programmes are in fact channelled through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development which we were told had greater capacity than the Ministry of Agriculture.

148. In Balkh province we learned about some of the problems facing farmers trying to grow melons. These had been suggested as an alternative crop but farmers were not sure how to grow them. In addition the melons were becoming infected with fleas which they did not know how to treat. The same village was also seeking investment in irrigation for its livestock. Balkh is one of the provinces which has been declared poppy-free in 2007 (see paragraph 121). In Helmand we talked with some farmers who were grateful for wells provided under the Helmand Agriculture and Rural Development programme but they said that they also needed drainage and irrigation for their fields in order to increase their

179 Ev 58 [DFID]

180 Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007 p.ii.

181 Ev 81 [BAAG]

182 Q 109 [Mr Page]

183 Ev 120 [Oxfam]

yields. Such suggestions have also been made in the study on economic alternatives to opium poppy.¹⁸⁴ Afghanaid told us that they employed the only Afghan vet in Ghowr province which was one of the most significant provinces for livestock.¹⁸⁵ The new Horticulture and Livelihoods Programme which DFID is contributing to is at an early stage although DFID expect it to deliver increased outputs from the horticulture, poultry and dairy sectors.¹⁸⁶

149. There has been insufficient attention to and funding for the agricultural and livestock sectors which could provide a range of alternatives to poppy cultivation. Improved irrigation would help to increase yields and thus income from agriculture. We would welcome an update on the possibilities of restoring and improving irrigation and drainage systems. The provision of relevant agricultural extension services to farmers could help to reduce poppy cultivation. The UK has long experience of working on agriculture. We recommend that DFID establish a programme to offer technical advice and training in agricultural extension services.

150. Whilst we support DFID's work with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, ways must be found to support and build capacity in the Ministry of Agriculture so that appropriate programmes in this sector can be developed. In addition, programmes must be devised to ensure that a range of social protection and safety measures are in place. In order to achieve these two goals, donors will need to allocate more funds to this sector—most effectively in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Microfinance

151. The provision of microfinance has been identified as an important mechanism for providing social protection and promoting employment in post-conflict environments.¹⁸⁷ The interim-Afghanistan National Development Strategy included microfinance as a priority and in 2003 the Microfinance Investment and Support Facility for Afghanistan (MISFA) was established. MISFA's objective is to help establish a healthy microfinance sector. Since 2004, credit has been provided to 375,000 clients in 23 provinces, of whom around 70% are women.¹⁸⁸ DFID has provided £20 million to MISFA.

152. Microfinance has been found to be an important way of bringing women into the workforce and giving them greater voice within their households and the community. In Kabul we visited the Ariana microfinance project, supported by MISFA, which loaned small amounts of funds—on average \$233—over a two-year period. Of their 8,432 clients, 6,362 were women. They had a 99% repayment rate. We met some of these women who explained the economic benefits of the loans for them. Most of the women had no business qualifications. We also visited the Finca microfinance project in Mazar-e-Sharif which funded existing small businesses.

184 Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007

185 Q 109 [Afghan aid]

186 Ev 58 [DFID]

187 J. Manor (ed) *Aid that works: successful development in Fragile States*, World Bank, 2007, p 229.

188 Ev 58 [DFID]

153. The potential benefits of microfinance could be extended if MISFA was encouraged to scale up its activities in rural areas. The success of microfinance initiatives in more urban areas can provide a base from which lessons can be learned. The development of rural enterprises would provide an alternative income stream to poppy production. In addition, since poppy traders offer credit facilities to farmers, microfinance could become a means of displacing these traders and providing an alternative means of assistance for the large numbers of rural poor who are indebted to poppy dealers.¹⁸⁹

154. The report on economic incentives and development to reduce opium poppy cultivation states that “the greatest counter-narcotics impact is likely to result from interventions which reach the largest number of rural households, particularly the poor, and bring the most income and employment.”¹⁹⁰ **We agree that counter-narcotics strategies need to reach as many poor people as possible and offer income and employment opportunities. We recommend that the UK Government gives greater priority to a multifaceted rural livelihoods approach.**

155. **Microfinance initiatives are an important way of bringing women into the workforce. They may also act as a vehicle for women’s empowerment in Afghanistan. We support attempts to scale up microfinance initiatives under the Government of Afghanistan’s Microfinance Investment and Support Facility. We recommend extending the outreach of microfinance to rural areas to encourage the growth of rural enterprises and the displacement of the role of poppy traders in providing credit.**

189 Ward, Mansfield, Oldham, Byrd, *Afghanistan: Economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production*, 20 December 2007, p ix.

190 *Ibid*, p ii.

8 Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Helmand province

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

156. The idea for Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)—integrated civilian-military missions—was trialled in Afghanistan as a means of ensuring that military successes were followed quickly by stabilisation and reconstruction efforts. The primary purpose of PRTs in Afghanistan is to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment. The PRT Steering Group states that the mission of PRTs is “to assist the Government of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and through military presence, enable SSR [security sector reform] and the reconstruction efforts.”¹⁹¹

157. There are 25 PRTs in Afghanistan led by 13 different donors.¹⁹² This means that some provinces do not have a PRT. Each PRT is run differently, within the guidelines set out by the PRT Steering Group, and tends to reflect donors’ national priorities as well as the local circumstances, especially the security situation.¹⁹³ We visited two PRTs on our visit. One in the north—Balkh province which is Swedish-led and the UK-led PRT in Lashkar Gah, Helmand. The PRT in Balkh was originally led by the UK until 2006.

158. Mazar-e-Sharif, in Balkh, is like many cities in the north of Afghanistan relatively peaceful. We were told that NGOs could operate freely without the need for military protection. The favourable security situation enables a vibrant economy to flourish and Balkh province is relatively well-off. We were told that half a day’s pay in Balkh was equivalent to a year’s income in some other provinces. Governor Atta Mohammad and the Provincial Council had been very successful in reducing poppy cultivation in the province although the methods and sustainability were questioned by some.

159. The PRT has not funded development projects, and it was criticised for this decision by locals including by the Governor of the Province (although the Swedes have recently decided that 15–20% of their funds will go through the PRT, mainly for infrastructure projects). The view was expressed to us that perhaps being peaceful and not growing poppies was disadvantageous since the province did not appear to be receiving much in terms of development assistance. This view reflects a misunderstanding about the primary purpose of PRTs—security and stability—as well as about the development assistance which donors are providing through Government of Afghanistan channels. However BAAG and other NGOs have pointed out that the distribution of aid across the provinces is uneven and that there is a tendency for aid to follow the national military priorities of donors.¹⁹⁴

191 PRT Steering Group, 17 January 2005, www.isaf6.eurocorps.org

192 Q 152 [DFID]

193 Q 22 [DFID]

194 Ev 76 [BAAG]

160. Concerns have also been expressed that PRTs run the risk of undermining efforts to build up local capacity.¹⁹⁵ The World Bank report on sub-national governance states that:

“PRTs confront—in fact they constitute—a critical dilemma: in trying to create the space for the Afghan state to develop and cohere they run the risk of undermining it. [. . .] PRTs should really only exist where security conditions make them absolutely necessary.”¹⁹⁶

This raises questions about the continued need for PRTs in the more secure provinces in the north.

161. Some PRTs have used private military companies to deliver aid projects and there are concerns about the implications of this for humanitarian space especially where it would be possible for non-military actors to operate. NGOs say they can only operate in insecure provinces on the basis of neutrality, independence and good relations with local communities and that association with the military tends to compromise their legitimacy and acceptance among local populations.¹⁹⁷

162. It is important that aid is evenly distributed in Afghanistan based on need and that the donor effort should be a ‘whole of Afghanistan’ effort. We accept that each Provincial Reconstruction Team has its own national funding mechanism which means that some PRTs are better funded than others. This is unavoidable. We do however believe that there needs to be a robust debate about the continued role of PRTs in more secure provinces. There is a lack of a clearly defined exit strategy for PRTs and accordingly uncertainty amongst communities in Afghanistan as to when and how functions of the PRTs will be transferred over to domestic provincial and local government. If the goal of the international effort is to build up Afghan capacity, PRTs should not perform functions which could be performed by Government of Afghanistan structures. We are mindful of the concerns expressed by NGOs about the need to preserve their humanitarian space and consider this to be an important issue which the donor community needs to take into account.

The UK effort in Helmand province

163. The UK took over leadership of the PRT in Lashkar Gah in May 2006. The UK is assisted by Estonia, Denmark and the US, as well as representatives from Jordan and the Czech Republic. UK objectives are set out in the Joint UK Plan for Helmand and the subsequent review of the plan.¹⁹⁸

164. The PRT in Lashkar Gah is co-located with the military headquarters of the UK armed forces—Task Force Helmand. This is intended to ensure that the PRT is an integrated civil-military operation with joint decision-making structures. The civilian team is comprised of about 26 staff from DFID, the Stabilisation Unit, the FCO, the British

195 Ev 119 [Oxfam]

196 World Bank, *Service Delivery and Governance at the sub-national level in Afghanistan*, July 2007.

197 Ev 84 [BAAG]

198 These are confidential UK Government documents. We were given access to them on the understanding that we would observe their confidentiality.

Embassy Drugs Team and UK police personnel. They live within the military compound. We were told that discussions were taking place about the possibility of increasing the civilian presence in the PRT.

165. Coordination is led by the Helmand Executive Group which comprises the leaders of the four strands of the Joint Plan: the Deputy Commander Task Force Helmand for security, the FCO head of the civilian operations for governance, DFID for development and the FCO leader of the counter-narcotics and rule of law teams.¹⁹⁹

166. The Joint Plan was based on the assumption that a secure zone or ‘lozenge’ would be established around Lashkar Gah.²⁰⁰ In fact the zone has been extended and now includes the towns of Sangin, Gereshk, Garmsir and more recently Musa Qala. The Deputy Commander of Task Force Helmand told us that the Governor had influence over about 50% of Helmand province which was secured by ISAF and Afghan National Army forces. This area, around the river basin, was also where about 50% of the population of the province lived. There were safe havens in the border regions of the province for the insurgents. These were often also centres of poppy-growing. The ability of the PRT to carry out stabilisation activities was limited to those areas which were under the influence of the Governor. We were also told it would be difficult for the military to seek to extend their influence further south unless they had access to hospital facilities for their soldiers.

167. The approach of the military was to “clear, hold and build”. The stabilisation advisor from the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (now the Stabilisation Unit) played a key advisory role in the early stages of this process which involved improving access, looking at population movements, return of Internally Displaced Persons, and setting up or re-establishing local governance structures in order to identify priorities which Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) could address.

168. QIPs are funded through the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP) and managed by the FCO.²⁰¹ There was a budget of £9 million for 2007, of which £3 million came from DFID.²⁰² We were told that Quick Impact Projects were designed to deliver a peace dividend in towns and villages. They had both development and military objectives.²⁰³ Effective joint military and civilian operations are important in ensuring that towns such as Musa Qala, which has recently been recaptured, do not fall into the hands of the insurgents again. QIPs might include building a school, digging wells or projects to increase female employment. The PRT was conscious of the need to build consent among civil society for such projects. DFID reassured us that, whereas in the past some QIPs might not have involved local governance structures, this was no longer the case.²⁰⁴

199 Ev 56 [DFID]

200 Ev 56 [DFID]

201 From March 2008 QIPs will be funded through the Stabilisation Aid Fund.

202 Q 23 [DFID]

203 Q 20 [DFID]

204 Q 148 [DFID]

169. DFID told us that over 180 such projects were planned, ongoing or completed. The monitoring of these projects was difficult because of the security situation which meant that the military had to monitor progress when the civilian staff were unable to get out from the base.²⁰⁵ In post-conflict situations the UN would normally have an important and neutral presence. However the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is not present in Helmand which meant there was more for the PRT to do. In addition there were few NGOs able to work in Helmand. The Secretary of State said that new funding for the Stabilisation Unit would enable an increase in the number of UK staff and that such staff would be more able to engage in insecure situations.²⁰⁶

170. The development adviser in Helmand told us that it was important that the military should not seek to move ahead of the civilian effort. DFID's written evidence confirms this:

“It is important to note the relationship between the military effort, reconstruction and development work and the ongoing political transition through national development programmes. The concept of the ‘lozenge’ is driven by military action, yet it can only be stabilised by reconstruction and development, governance and political engagement. The National Development Programmes engage in the space created. It is only through sustainable efforts being encompassed in all the activities that the objectives set out in the UK Helmand Plan will be realised.”²⁰⁷

The development adviser also emphasised that the PRT had to work with the elected and nominated leaders in the Province—it could not pick and choose. Thus what it could achieve was limited by the capacity of local governance. It was sometimes difficult for these groups even to decide what their priorities were. But we were told that progress had been made: two years ago the PRT would have been dealing with warlords and tribal fighting; now there were nascent governance structures in place, although it would take some time for these to be effective.

171. During our evidence session with the Secretary of State we discussed progress on the building of a new school in Sangin in Helmand.²⁰⁸ In follow-up written evidence from the Department we were told that the new school would take approximately six months to complete.²⁰⁹ There had been some concern during our visit as to whether this was the right priority for development and the Minister of Education had highlighted to us the general point about the need for more teachers to be trained before more schools were built. **We would welcome an update on how the new school being built in Sangin will be staffed and operated.**

172. Three incidents since our visit have reinforced the importance of working with Afghan leaders. We discussed with the Secretary of State the expulsion of two international diplomats, accused of negotiating with the Taliban, by the Government of Afghanistan.²¹⁰

205 Q 20 [DFID]

206 Q 140 [DFID]

207 Ev 56 [DFID]

208 Q 139 [DFID]

209 Ev 61 [DFID]

210 Q 128 [DFID]

He thought there had been a misunderstanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Afghan and UK authorities. Subsequently President Karzai is reported to have accused the UK of failing to bring security to Helmand, and for interfering in the choice of appointments of key provincial posts.²¹¹ While such accusations do not themselves negate the UK effort in Helmand they do flag-up the significance of local ownership of the reconstruction effort. Disagreements about the choice of UN Special Representative have also been aired publicly (see paragraphs 65–67).

173. The Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand is trialling new methods of joint military-civilian cooperation in difficult circumstances. However we note that it is extremely difficult for the civilian teams to move out from the base to meet with local people. This means that the military are often closely involved with the work of DFID and the Stabilisation Unit. We accept that in such an unpredictable security environment this may be necessary but it may mean that DFID's work is viewed by local people as one and the same as that of the military. Where there is still an ongoing insurgency this is potentially dangerous for DFID and its staff. It is important that the distinction between development and military activities is maintained. We welcome the increase in staff for the Stabilisation Unit if such staff are able to travel around more easily without compromising their security.

174. Quick Impact Projects are not a substitute for development and reconstruction. We believe that DFID should continue its work through Government of Afghanistan programmes in rural development as these present greater opportunities for long-term development, including building up the capacity of local governance structures.

175. The co-location of the civilian and military teams is designed to ensure joined-up decision-making. We believe this is a good idea. It is of utmost importance that the military do not seek to extend their operations at a faster pace than the civilian Provincial Reconstruction Team capacity and advice. This may mean scaling back political objectives in Helmand.

176. Differences have recently emerged between the Government of Afghanistan and the UK and the international community over the effectiveness of the military strategy in Helmand, the choice of governor and who should take the lead in any dealings with the insurgents. Such disagreements highlight the importance of ensuring that the process of reconstruction becomes an Afghan-led one.

211 "The British are making things worse, says Afghan President", The Times, 25 January 2008.

9 Conclusion

177. Reconstructing Afghanistan will be a lengthy process. Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries in the world in 2001 with some of the lowest human development indicators. Afghanistan is off-track on all the MDGs but has set its own target date of 2020, five years after the UN target date. If Afghanistan meets this target it will be a significant achievement.²¹²

178. The process of reconstruction needs to be Afghan-led. Donor assistance and guidance will be required but such assistance should aim to build Afghan capacity to fund and manage Afghan development to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. After years of violent conflict they deserve no less.

179. In Afghanistan everything is a priority, and yet it is not possible to address all priorities simultaneously. We have not therefore attempted to cover all aspects of the development and reconstruction process. Instead we have sought to concentrate on the areas we consider to present the greatest challenges and those which might, if properly overcome, establish the framework upon which other sectors can build.

180. Most of the people we met during our visit spoke favourably of DFID and the UK effort. It is perfectly understandable and right that Afghans should want to share the quality of life which they know is available in other parts of the world. This will however take time and it is important that donors remain committed for the long term. Afghanistan must not become an aid orphan—with too little international support to enable it to become a stable and secure country. The risks of abandoning Afghanistan and the consequences for global security are significant.

181. Thus the challenge of reconstructing Afghanistan is one which is jointly owned by the people of Afghanistan and the international community. It is a challenge which involves a careful balance between long-term objectives and short-term needs and it is a challenge which requires a realistic assessment of the potential and limits of post-conflict reconstruction in a country with weak institutions, low capacity and ongoing insecurity.

182. In recent weeks, there have been changes in the political atmosphere and a deterioration in the security situation which make the outlook seem less positive than when we visited Afghanistan in October. Whilst the complexities of the situation are extremely challenging, we remain determined that the concerted efforts which we urge in this report are made, so that reconstruction and development can be achieved in Afghanistan.

212 UN, *Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007*

Recommendations

The importance of being in Afghanistan

1. We fully support the continuing commitment of the UK Government, in partnership with the Government and people of Afghanistan, to help to bring peace and security to Afghanistan and to promote political reform and reconstruction and development. We accept that the commitment, in terms of development assistance, is likely to last at least a generation. As one of the poorest countries in the world, with continuing humanitarian needs, Afghanistan should remain a major focus for DFID. (Paragraph 10)
2. It is important that the job of helping to bring security to Afghanistan, in which over 7,000 British troops are engaged, is given full support by the British public. We recognise the strong UK media interest in this involvement given that British troops are putting their lives on the line. While acknowledging that continuing insecurity threatens to set back progress, we are also conscious that the media focus on this has meant that achievements in political reform, economic growth and in the provision of basic services are not getting the attention they deserve. We recommend that DFID's media strategy for Afghanistan is strengthened to ensure that development achievements in Afghanistan are given the press coverage in the UK which they merit. (Paragraph 15)
3. Expectations need to be managed so that they accord more realistically with the capacity—both of the Government of Afghanistan and of the donor community—to deliver. Greater publicity of successes and of the nature and scope of DFID's work in Afghanistan would help in this regard. We recommend that DFID develop a new communications strategy in Afghanistan to ensure accurate information about the scale of its work is widely circulated. (Paragraph 17)
4. We believe it is fundamental to the rebuilding of Afghanistan that international commitments made by the Government of Afghanistan and by donors on the rights of women are honoured and given greater priority. (Paragraph 19)

Conditions of service for UK staff in Afghanistan

5. The work DFID staff undertake in environments such as Afghanistan is demanding and context-specific. We believe that they should be given a level of support which is commensurate with the responsibilities they are asked to bear, including an appropriate level of language, cultural and security training. (Paragraph 24)
6. We agree that Afghanistan should be a priority for DFID. We understand that consideration is being given to how best to encourage staff to work in insecure environments and to increasing the length of postings. We believe that this is an important issue if DFID intends to remain in countries such as Afghanistan since there is a limited pool of staff who will undertake such postings. Current working conditions are comparable with those of other donors but consideration should be given to the impact of six-week periods of work on overall efficiency. We would urge

DFID to encourage those staff who gain experience of working in Afghanistan to return to similar posts after a sufficient break so as to build up a cadre of DFID staff with experience of working in insecure environments. (Paragraph 26)

7. We welcome the approval of an increased number of helicopters in Afghanistan for the military effort announced by the Prime Minister on 12 December 2007. We would also welcome an update on the deployment of those helicopters and confirmation of how much increased effective capacity will be available. In addition we noted the use we made of US operated helicopters in Helmand and would like to know if they will still be available after the increase in the UK contribution. (Paragraph 28)
8. We also note that DFID and Embassy employees are hindered in carrying out their jobs in a timely fashion when they are subject to lengthy waits for secure transport. Given the priority which the UK Government has placed on Afghanistan, we consider that appropriate logistical support for the civilian effort is essential. We recommend the early provision of a dedicated aeroplane for the use of DFID and other Embassy staff to carry out their work in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 29)

DFID's programme in Afghanistan

9. We welcome the allocation of additional funds for development and stabilisation assistance across Afghanistan. We wish to be given more details on the allocation of the funding in response to this report. (Paragraph 31)
10. We agree that DFID's objectives should be to help build and support a viable sovereign state in Afghanistan and that the majority of DFID funds should therefore continue to be directed through the Government of Afghanistan. The priority for donors should be the "Afghanisation of development"—building up Afghan capacity at all levels for successful development and reconstruction. However DFID must also continue to ensure that funding is available for NGOs in their key advocacy tasks including helping to establish a robust civil society capable of holding the government to account. DFID should also ensure that NGOs promoting women's rights are adequately funded. (Paragraph 38)
11. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue to work towards International Monetary Fund revenue mobilisation targets as a means to ensuring that its future funding base is secure. We believe that DFID's assistance in this respect is vital to progress. (Paragraph 40)
12. We do not consider that the UK Government's development programme is unduly slanted towards Helmand at present. 80% of DFID's funding is channelled through the Government of Afghanistan. The UK effort in Afghanistan is thus a "whole of Afghanistan" one. Misunderstandings about this need to be countered in Afghanistan, and in the UK, by improved media strategies. (Paragraph 44)
13. Given the UK leadership of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand it is important that sufficient resources are available to ensure that stabilisation and development follow military action speedily. This need not be solely the responsibility of the UK since other donors are present there. DFID should also try

to ensure that gains made in more secure provinces are not lost for lack of funds and should coordinate with other donors more effectively in this regard. (Paragraph 45)

Donor coordination

14. We look forward to receiving confirmation of the start of the maternity training programme in the unit built with UK funds in Lashkar Gah. (Paragraph 53)
15. We note that, according to the Peace Dividend Trust, out of a total of US\$1.36 billion spent between March 2005 and March 2006 from major donors the local impact was around 31% or the equivalent of \$424 million. Data provided by the Peace Dividend Trust for 2005 also suggests that, although US Official Development Assistance was six times as large as UK ODA, its local impact was only twice as much. (Paragraph 59)
16. Development agencies need to come to international agreements among themselves about what constitutes good practice for post-war reconstruction and development in fragile states, especially when they are working in partnership with the military. The development community needs a body of agreed principles every bit as much as the military. (Paragraph 60)
17. The international community committed themselves to the Afghanistan Compact under which they have agreed to provide an increased proportion of their assistance through the core government budget. While DFID is exemplary in this respect, other donors are not. This means that the Government of Afghanistan does not “own” the development and reconstruction process and that the local impact of donor assistance is greatly reduced. DFID’s efforts at improving donor coordination in this regard are commendable but the results are currently unsatisfactory. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund has been shown to be effective. The use of parallel structures to deliver assistance by the US does nothing to build up Afghan capacity, and will therefore lengthen the time-period for which aid is necessary. Such policies are also contrary to Paris Declaration principles and commitments made under the Afghanistan Compact. We believe DFID should make renewed efforts to encourage the US and other donors to channel a greater proportion of their funding through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. (Paragraph 63)
18. We urge the UK to use its leadership role in the Provincial Reconstruction Team to encourage donors to provide more resources to Afghan government health services in Helmand. (Paragraph 64)

A high level UN coordinator

19. We are disappointed that sufficient international momentum could not be gained for the appointment of a high level joint UN, NATO, EU coordinator for Afghanistan. Criticisms by the Afghan Government of the UK and the international community’s efforts seem to be becoming more frequent. Problems of donor coordination are leading to a proliferation of disparate projects, low local impact of funding and creating a poor impression in Afghanistan about donors’ lack of agreement. We believe such outcomes are harmful to the international effort in Afghanistan and

may set back progress in reconstruction. If the international community will not agree the appointment of a super-envoy, ways must be found to ensure that the role of UN Special Representative is properly resourced and that the incumbent has sufficient weight in dealing with partner countries. We hope that the Government of Afghanistan can recognise the long-term benefits for them of the UN appointing a strong representative to improve coordination. (Paragraph 67)

Security conditions

20. We note the UK Commander of Taskforce Helmand's explanation that the key objective of the military was to gain the consent of the local population and to marginalise the insurgents and starve them of their support base. We also note that most people in Afghanistan do not support the insurgency so that influence-winning activities are more important than overt military force. Cooperation and understanding between NATO forces and the Afghan Government and armed forces are crucial to success. (Paragraph 73)
21. We would like to pay tribute to the commitment and sacrifice being made by UK forces in this difficult environment. We were disappointed by the tone and timing of the recent criticisms made by President Karzai of UK military operations in Helmand, particularly as these concerns were not raised with us by the Government of Afghanistan during our visit. We are concerned that such comments risk undermining the support of the British people for the UK's long-term commitment to Afghanistan. (Paragraph 74)
22. Increasing insecurity and the continuing insurgency are threatening the reconstruction effort in many parts of Afghanistan. The relationship between security and development is a key determinant of success in post-conflict environments. While it is important that the NATO forces remain in Afghanistan to help provide the security which is a necessary precondition for reconstruction, it is clear to us that without tangible improvements in people's lives the insurgency will not be defeated. (Paragraph 77)
23. We believe that greater international pressure should be placed on Pakistan to control more effectively the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Unless this happens the Taliban will have a steady supply of recruits and the international effort to bring stability and security to Afghanistan will be futile. (Paragraph 80)

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the UK troop contribution

24. We support the Government's commitment to bringing security and stability to Afghanistan and commend the work of our armed forces there. (Paragraph 82)
25. We support the conclusion of the Defence Committee that the excessive use of national caveats increases the risk of impairing the effectiveness of the International Security Assistance Force and will increase the length of time which NATO troops are required to be in Afghanistan. The UK Government should continue to press contributing nations to reduce these to facilitate more effective ISAF operations. (Paragraph 84)

26. We are concerned that civilian-military co-operation is weakened because UK military commanders serve only a six-month tour of duty while the civilians are in post for longer periods. We ask the Secretary of State to discuss with the Ministry of Defence the feasibility of extending UK military commanders' tours of duty in Helmand to, say, one year. (Paragraph 85)

Security Sector Reform

27. There has been significant progress in the building up of an effective Afghan National Army. There is still some way to go before it is a fully capable force and we commend the role played by the UK to date in training and mentoring. (Paragraph 87)
28. Progress in creating an effective and legitimate Afghan National Police force has been slow. Corruption and bribery are rife and this is hampering acceptance of the police as a force for good. There are insufficient police trainers and there is no clear consensus about what type of police force—paramilitary or civilian—is required. We believe that the issue of remit must be clarified as quickly as possible. (Paragraph 91)
29. We believe that the new EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) is a step in the right direction in that it makes policing a shared EU responsibility. However we are disappointed that progress has been so slow. This mission should ensure that the recruitment, training and retention of female police officers is given appropriate priority within the overall imperative of building an efficient and effective police force. (Paragraph 94)
30. We have reservations about the suggestion of arming local communities to defend themselves. While we accept that there are many people who already have weapons, we believe that it is important that donors do not encourage or exacerbate factionalism and tribalism. (Paragraph 96)

The justice sector

31. Violence against women is still pervasive and without a functioning formal justice sector threatens to set back progress made thus far in the realisation of women's rights. A key part of protecting women's rights is ensuring they have proper access to justice. Funding for the justice sector is disproportionately low and we believe its reform should now be a priority for donors and for the Government of Afghanistan. We recommend that the UK Government play its part in this through increased funding for the justice sector from the Stabilisation Aid Fund. We accept that changing the values of society is a long-term process; however, we reiterate that the Government of Afghanistan should seek to honour its commitments to international human rights law in respect of women. Consideration should also be given to inviting Islamic countries to advise the Government of Afghanistan on establishing a justice system that would meet the needs of women, children and minorities and protect their fundamental human rights. (Paragraph 100)

Sub-national governance

32. The Government of Afghanistan has recognised the need to address sub-national governance and to make the existing system work better. To this end the Independent Directorate for Local Governance has been established and has set out for itself an ambitious programme. We believe that clarification of the role of provincial governors and the establishment of local tax-raising powers should be a priority. We welcome the allocation of £1.5 million of DFID funding to support the work of the IDLG. (Paragraph 112)
33. Community Development Councils have created elected forums for inclusive community level decision-making. Communities have been empowered and linkages established between neighbourhoods. Funding from the National Solidarity Programme has enabled CDCs to identify needs and acquire funding for specific community priority projects which deliver basic services. Such developments are important for creating an active and engaged civil society. CDCs have also been effective in encouraging the proper involvement of women in local decision-making. (Paragraph 119)
34. Concerns have been raised about the future of Community Development Councils as the future of their funding mechanism, the National Solidarity Programme, is itself uncertain. We consider that the tangible benefits of CDCs are significant. Decisions about future NSP funds need to be made before current funding expires. Community Development Councils have enabled valuable community level decision-making in a context where the rest of government is highly centralized. Given the limited reach of central government and the need for rural development as part of the counter-narcotics effort, we recommend that the UK Government actively encourage the continuation and formalisation of CDCs in the medium term recognising it will require a significant share of the limited funds under Government of Afghanistan control. (Paragraph 120)

Narcotics and counter-narcotics

35. Opium poppy production is causally linked to insecurity and corruption in Afghanistan. Suggestions of the involvement in narcotics of high-ranking officials are worrying. We believe greater effort on the part of the President and donors is essential to ensure that involvement in opium poppy production is stamped out at every level of government. (Paragraph 124)
36. A key part of any counter-narcotics policy is tackling the traders of opium. Controlling drug trafficking between Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular requires, as a necessary condition, greater knowledge of and control over the borderlands and assistance from the Government of Pakistan. (Paragraph 131)
37. We agree with the UK and Afghan Governments that aerial spraying of poppies is not desirable for health and safety reasons and because it risks increasing insecurity in already insecure provinces. (Paragraph 132)
38. Wide-scale eradication has not contributed to a sustainable reduction in poppy cultivation in many provinces. We believe that while eradication has a legitimate

role, for example in targeting large landowners, an excessive focus on it and on reducing acreage under poppy cultivation has been at the expense of the creation of qualitative changes in rural livelihood opportunities (Paragraph 134)

Alternative livelihoods

39. The increase in opium poppy cultivation is directly linked to continuing insecurity in many parts of Afghanistan. Insecurity prevents the development of alternative and sustainable income sources. Poppy cultivation can be an attractive choice in a high-risk environment, especially for poor farmers. We believe that expectations that poppy cultivation will be reduced over a short period are misplaced. Given the heavy reliance on poppy cultivation for household income, any enforced dramatic reduction would have significant negative social, political and economic consequences. We welcome the shift in thinking towards a more holistic and integrated approach to alternatives. We commend the World Bank and DFID for their commitment to undertake research and reformulate policies based on evidence. (Paragraph 139)
40. We are disappointed that the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund has not been more successful in its efforts thus far. Given research findings on the need to include a counter-narcotics perspective in all development programmes, consideration should be given to whether a separate counter-narcotics fund is the appropriate mechanism for driving this forward. (Paragraph 140)

Rural livelihoods

41. There has been insufficient attention to and funding for the agricultural and livestock sectors which could provide a range of alternatives to poppy cultivation. Improved irrigation would help to increase yields and thus income from agriculture. We would welcome an update on the possibilities of restoring and improving irrigation and drainage systems. The provision of relevant agricultural extension services to farmers could help to reduce poppy cultivation. The UK has long experience of working on agriculture. We recommend that DFID establish a programme to offer technical advice and training in agricultural extension services. (Paragraph 149)
42. Whilst we support DFID's work with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, ways must be found to support and build capacity in the Ministry of Agriculture so that appropriate programmes in this sector can be developed. In addition, programmes must be devised to ensure that a range of social protection and safety measures are in place. In order to achieve these two goals, donors will need to allocate more funds to this sector—most effectively in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture. (Paragraph 150)
43. We agree that counter-narcotics strategies need to reach as many poor people as possible and offer income and employment opportunities. We recommend that the UK Government gives greater priority to a multifaceted rural livelihoods approach. (Paragraph 154)

44. Microfinance initiatives are an important way of bringing women into the workforce. They may also act as a vehicle for women's empowerment in Afghanistan. We support attempts to scale up microfinance initiatives under the Government of Afghanistan's Microfinance Investment and Support Facility. We recommend extending the outreach of microfinance to rural areas to encourage the growth of rural enterprises and the displacement of the role of poppy traders in providing credit. (Paragraph 155)

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

45. It is important that aid is evenly distributed in Afghanistan based on need and that the donor effort should be a 'whole of Afghanistan' effort. We accept that each Provincial Reconstruction Team has its own national funding mechanism which means that some PRTs are better funded than others. This is unavoidable. We do however believe that there needs to be a robust debate about the continued role of PRTs in more secure provinces. There is a lack of a clearly defined exit strategy for PRTs and accordingly uncertainty amongst communities in Afghanistan as to when and how functions of the PRTs will be transferred over to domestic provincial and local government. If the goal of the international effort is to build up Afghan capacity, PRTs should not perform functions which could be performed by Government of Afghanistan structures. We are mindful of the concerns expressed by NGOs about the need to preserve their humanitarian space and consider this to be an important issue which the donor community needs to take into account. (Paragraph 162)

The UK effort in Helmand province

46. We would welcome an update on how the new school being built in Sangin will be staffed and operated. (Paragraph 171)
47. The Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand is trialling new methods of joint military-civilian cooperation in difficult circumstances. However we note that it is extremely difficult for the civilian teams to move out from the base to meet with local people. This means that the military are often closely involved with the work of DFID and the Stabilisation Unit. We accept that in such an unpredictable security environment this may be necessary but it may mean that DFID's work is viewed by local people as one and the same as that of the military. Where there is still an ongoing insurgency this is potentially dangerous for DFID and its staff. It is important that the distinction between development and military activities is maintained. We welcome the increase in staff for the Stabilisation Unit if such staff are able to travel around more easily without compromising their security. (Paragraph 173)
48. Quick Impact Projects are not a substitute for development and reconstruction. We believe that DFID should continue its work through Government of Afghanistan programmes in rural development as these present greater opportunities for long-term development, including building up the capacity of local governance structures. (Paragraph 174)

49. The co-location of the civilian and military teams is designed to ensure joined-up decision-making. We believe this is a good idea. It is of utmost importance that the military do not seek to extend their operations at a faster pace than the civilian Provincial Reconstruction Team capacity and advice. This may mean scaling back political objectives in Helmand. (Paragraph 175)
50. Differences have recently emerged between the Government of Afghanistan and the UK and the international community over the effectiveness of the military strategy in Helmand, the choice of governor and who should take the lead in any dealings with the insurgents. Such disagreements highlight the importance of ensuring that the process of reconstruction becomes an Afghan-led one. (Paragraph 176)

Annex A: The Committee's visit programme in Afghanistan

The International Development Committee visited Afghanistan from 25 October to 1 November 2007. The key meetings were as follows:

Thursday 25 October

Arrive in Kabul

Security briefing

Friday 26 October

Briefing from DFID-Afghanistan officials

Meetings at ISAF HQ including with General Garry Robison, Deputy Commander (Stability) ISAF

Meeting with NGOs: Afghanaid, Aga Khan Foundation, Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghanistan Relief (ACBAR), Asia Foundation, Mercy Corps and Oxfam

Barnett Rubin, Director of Studies and Senior Fellow, Center on International Co-operation, New York University

Working dinner with ISAF Commander, donor country ambassadors and UN representatives

Saturday 27 October

Briefing from British Embassy Kabul staff

Meeting with Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

Visit to Ariana Financial Services microfinance project and discussions with clients

Visit to mint-processing project

Meeting with Country Manager, World Bank and other officials

Dinner with international partners (Asian Development Bank, European Commission, UN, USAID, World Bank; German, Dutch and Indian development agencies)

Sunday 28 October

Breakfast meeting with women National Assembly members and public officials:

- Hangama Anwari, Commissioner, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
- Shukrai Barakzai, Member of the National Assembly
- Fawzia Koofi, Member of the National Assembly

- Qudriya Parsat, Member of the National Assembly
- Zohra Rasekh, Director of Human Rights and Gender Equality in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Momina Yari, Commissioner, Independent Electoral Commission

Meeting with General Dan McNeill, Commander, ISAF

Meeting with Jelani Popal, Director General of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance

Working lunch with Ministers and officials:

- Mr Atmar, Minister of Education
- Mr Khodaidad, Minister of Counter-Narcotics
- Mr Ramin, Minister of Agriculture
- Dr Mastoor, Budget Director in the Ministry of Finance
- Rahela Siddiqi, Senior Adviser, Civil Service Commission

Meeting with Tom Koenigs, UN Special Representative and other UN officials

Meeting with Adib Farhadi, Director, Afghanistan National Development Strategy Secretariat

The Committee divided into two groups for visits to Helmand and Balkh provinces

Group 1: Helmand

Monday 29 October

Briefing from Head of Provincial Reconstruction Team and Commander of Helmand Taskforce

Briefing from Deputy Helmand Co-ordinator

Meeting with Governor Wafa

Meeting with Provincial Council

Meeting with representatives of line Ministries in Helmand

Tuesday 30 October

Visits to development projects, including a school, a midwifery training centre, a hospital and water projects.

Group 2: Balkh

Monday 29 October

Visit to Langar Khana Khord district to meet Community Development Councils (CDC) and discuss development projects

Visit to Takhta Pul village to meet Community Development Council and discuss water supply project.

Visit to Drug Rehabilitation Clinic in Mazar-e-Sharif

Working dinner with Provincial Reconstruction Team Swedish and Finnish representatives and USAID

Tuesday 30 October

Visit to HALO Trust project to observe weapons clearance and discuss demining

Meeting with Balkh Provincial Council

Meeting and working lunch with Governor Atta

Visit to FINCA microfinance project and discussion with clients

Both parties return to Kabul

Wednesday 31 October (Kabul)

Visit to school. Discussions with Executive Director, National Solidarity Programme, local CDC members and school pupils.

Visit to Community Centre to meet local CDC

Meeting with President Karzai

Working lunch with Ashraf Gani, former Finance Minister and Chairman of the Institute of State Effectiveness

Meeting with Ambassador of Pakistan

Meeting with National Youth Parliament

Thursday 1 November

Depart Afghanistan

Annex B: Letter to the Secretary of State for International Development

Letter to the Secretary of State for International Development from the Chairman of the International Development Committee, 20 November 2007

As you know, the International Development Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into Afghanistan which included a seven-day visit to the country at the end of October. We are very grateful for the assistance we received from DFID staff in organising a programme which enabled us to meet a wide range of key people in Kabul, Helmand and Balkh and to visit local development projects.

We had hoped to report our findings to the House early in the new year. We have, however, noted the Prime Minister's comments in the debate on the Queen's Speech on 6 November that he intends to make a statement on Afghanistan, including on the Government's proposals for development there, in the next few weeks. We may therefore need to adjust the timescale for the rest of inquiry to ensure we take full account of any change in Government policy. As you are aware, this has also affected the timing of the oral evidence which you have agreed to provide.

Our visit and evidence to date have enabled us to form some preliminary views on the key issues affecting development in Afghanistan and we wished to make these known to you now so that they can inform the Government's current discussions.

- **The UK's role:** we believe that it is right for the UK to be involved in Afghanistan and that this should be a long-term commitment. This needs to be restated to both the UK and the Afghan people.
- **Donor activity:** there is a problem of perception in that the Afghan people do not appreciate the full scope and scale of what the international community, and the UK specifically, is contributing in terms of aid and development. This communication problem needs to be addressed and the Afghan people need to be properly informed about how donor funds are being spent.
- **Relationship with the Government of Afghanistan:** the international community must operate in Afghanistan in a way that strengthens rather than undermines the Government of Afghanistan (GoA). One important aspect of this is ensuring that Provincial Reconstruction Teams and donors align their work programmes with the priorities of the GoA and regularly consult with the relevant Afghan institutions.
- **Civil/military co-operation:** the balance between military engagement and civil and development activities needs to be reassessed. It is important that the pace of military engagement does not exceed the capacity of local governance structures and civil society in relation to stabilisation and development activities.

- **Sub-national governance:** Community Development Councils are an important building-block of local governance and much has been gained from the involvement of local people in development projects from which they directly benefit. It is not yet clear, however, what their future role will be nor how they might fit into provincial and district structures whose own roles need to be clarified and their institutions strengthened.
- **Women:** insufficient progress is being made on the status and rights of women who are too often the victims of domestic violence and who are not yet properly protected by the justice system.
- **Counter-narcotics:** this is a complex issue which requires a multifaceted approach. Tackling poppy cultivation is inextricably linked to better governance, economic growth, improved security and rural development in its broadest sense. Alternative crops can only be one element in any effective strategy.
- **Afghan National Army:** the Army is making good progress towards being an effective force and should be capable of some independent operations in the next three or four years but the continued support of the international community will be needed, particularly for logistical and medical support and for operational back-up.
- **Police:** lack of training and corruption are significant obstacles to the Afghan police being an effective, national force capable of providing the necessary security for people to go about their daily lives. Lack of security is impeding development and diminishing the people's faith in government. This needs to be addressed.
- **Justice:** insufficient progress has been made in establishing a state justice system which the Afghan people trust. They are resorting to traditional and informal justice systems which may not support the rights of women and children. Disillusion with state justice may also increase local support for the Taliban and other insurgent groups.
- **UK civilian effort:** given the difficulties of travel within Afghanistan, UK efforts would be assisted by the provision of a dedicated aeroplane for use by DFID and British Embassy staff.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence.

List of Acronyms

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANDCS	Afghan National Drugs Control Strategy
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
BAAG	British and Irish Afghan Agencies Group
CNTF	Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund
CDCs	Community Development Councils
EUPOL	EU Police Mission in Afghanistan
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GCPP	Global Conflict Prevention Pool
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
i-ANDS	interim-Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISE	Institute for State Effectiveness
JCMB	Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board
MISFA	Microfinance Investment and Support Facility for Afghanistan
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PCRU	Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIPS	Quick Impact Projects
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 5 February 2008

Members present:

Malcolm Bruce, in the Chair

Hugh Bayley
Richard Burden
James Duddridge

Ann McKechin
Mr Marsha Singh
Sir Robert Smith

Draft Report (*Reconstructing Afghanistan*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 182 read and agreed to.

Annexes agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 12 and 22 October 2007 and 17 January 2008.

Several papers were ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary Archives.

[Adjourned till tomorrow at 10 am.]

Witnesses

Tuesday 23 October 2008

	<i>Page</i>
Mr Jim Drummond , Director, South Asia Division, Ms Lindy Cameron , Former Head of DFID Afghanistan, Department for International Development and Mr Peter Holland , Head, Afghan Drugs Inter-Departmental Unit, Foreign & Commonwealth Office	Ev 1

Thursday 15 November 2008

Mr David Mansfield , Independent Consultant	Ev 14
Mr David Page , Chair of Trustees, Afghanaid, Mr Mudasser Hussain Siddiqui , ActionAid Afghanistan, Ms Elizabeth Winter , Special Adviser, Policy and Advocacy, British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG)	Ev 21

Thursday 17 January 2008

Rt Hon Douglas Alexander, MP , Secretary of State for International Development, Mr Marshall Elliott , Head of DFID Afghanistan, Ms Philippa Rogers , Deputy Head of Afghan Drugs Inter-Departmental Unit, Foreign & Commonwealth Office	Ev 31
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List of written evidence

Department for International Development	Ev 50
ActionAid	Ev 62
Afghanaid	Ev 68
British Council	Ev 74
British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG)	Ev 75:Ev 90
Christian Aid	Ev 95
David Elliot, Independent Consultant	Ev 101
Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS UK)	Ev 102
Institute for State Effectiveness	Ev 107
Medécins du Monde UK	Ev 110
Merlin	Ev 111
Oxfam International, Afghanistan	Ev 114
The Senlis Council	Ev 127
Stop The Traffik	Ev 129
WOMANKIND Worldwide	Ev 131

List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but to save printing costs it has not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Independent Directorate for Local Governance of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- *Strategy Paper, September 2007*
- *Strategic Framework*
- *Communities Self-Defense Program*

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2007-08

First Report	DFID Departmental Report 2007	HC 64
Second Report	Development and Trade: Cross-departmental Working	HC 68
Third Report	Work of the Committee 2007	HC 255

Session 2006-07

First Report	DFID Departmental Report 2006	HC 71 (HC 328)
Second Report	HIV/AIDS: Marginalised groups and emerging epidemics	HC 46-I&II (HC 329)
Third Report	Work of the Committee in 2005-06	HC 228
Fourth Report	Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories	HC 114-I&II (HC 430)
Fifth Report	EU Development and Trade Policies: An update	HC 271 (HC 622)
Sixth Report	Sanitation and Water	HC 126-I&II (HC 854)
Seventh report	Fair Trade and Development	HC 356-I&II (HC 1047)
Eighth report	DFID's Programme in Vietnam	HC 732 (1062)
Ninth report	Prospects for sustainable peace in Uganda	HC 853 (HC1063)
Tenth report	DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border	HC 645-I&II (HC 1070)

Session 2005-06

First Report	Delivering the Goods: HIV/AIDS and the Provision of Anti-Retrovirals	HC 708-I&II (HC 922)
Second Report	Darfur: The killing continues	HC 657 (HC 1017)
Third Report	The WTO Hong Kong Ministerial and the Doha Development Agenda	HC 730-I&II (HC 1425)
Fourth Report	Private Sector Development	HC 921-I&II (HC 1629)
Fifth Report	Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2004, Quarterly Reports for 2005, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny	HC 873 (Cm 6954)
Sixth Report	Conflict and Development: Peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction	HC 923 (HC 172)
Seventh Report	Humanitarian response to natural disasters	HC 1188 (HC 229)