

**IMPLEMENTATION OF AID INITIATIVES IN POST-CONFLICT
RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT:
AFGHANISTAN 2002 - 2008**

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Abstract

This study examines what drives success in the implementation of international reconstruction and development aid projects in a post-conflict environment. It poses three key questions: 1) How important is the national government's support for project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development? 2) What role does donor coordination on the ground play for project success? and 3) What other factors explain project success?

To address these questions, I design and test a novel explanatory model of effective project implementation in post-conflict reconstruction and development, using an original data set of 124 projects undertaken by six major multilateral and bilateral aid agencies in Afghanistan during 2002-2008.

Study results highlight two factors that appear to consistently influence project success: the national government's support, and the quality of project leadership (i.e project manager or project coordinator) on the international project implementation side. Most interestingly, the combination of national government's support and strong project leadership considerably increases the likelihood of project success, as well as the level of success achieved. Donor coordination arrangements made at the stage of project implementation appear to be a generally weak predictor of project success.

The qualitative findings of the study illustrate in what way various project success factors in the model impact on project success. Notably, they identify and add to the conventional 'instrumental' qualities of leadership the qualities of 'moral' leadership, such as ability to build trust and respect with national counterparts based on the record of competence, dedication, and delivery.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Skeptics contend that international aid often not only does not help the intended beneficiaries, but in fact negatively affects governance, and hence further impoverishes recipient states (Bauer 1976, Easterly 2001, Easterly 2006, Moyo 2008).

However, there is a potent body of argumentation and evidence that aid and policy reforms, *if done properly* can be highly effective in supporting economic recovery and growth in post-conflict and fragile situations, which in turn substantially reduces the risks of conflict relapse (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, McGillivray and Feeney 2005, Collier and Sambanis 2005, Sachs 2006, Collier 2008). Indeed, for many post-conflict and fragile states, foreign aid has played the role of a ‘holding operation’ to help keep these states from falling apart (Collier 2008). In a recent analysis of the impact of aid on incidence of terrorism, Young and Findley (2011) show that foreign aid decreases terrorism, especially when aid initiatives are targeted toward sectors, such as education, health, civil society, and conflict prevention. Such sector-level results indicate that foreign aid can be an effective instrument in fighting terrorism if allocated in appropriate ways¹. US President Obama in a recent interview said that providing foreign

¹ Authors include separate measures of education aid to test the specific argument that aid targeted to education may prevent terrorism, and use the most comprehensive databases on foreign aid and transnational terrorism—AidData and ITERATE—to provide a series of statistical tests.

aid, aside from it being the right thing to do, is also part of US's overall security strategy, and it pays off in many ways².

Yet, there has been major criticism of the ways in which aid has been delivered in recent years. The critics of ineffective aid delivery modalities form two major camps, both of which blame the donors for the shortcomings, but in different ways (Renard 2006)³.

The first line of critique states that project aid has mainly failed because donors have been unwilling to put governments in the driver's seat, and instead preferred to micro-manage 'their' projects. It argues in particular that the structural adjustment policies of the 1990s foundered largely because donors, especially the Bretton Woods institutions, indiscriminately imposed the same reforms everywhere, and without seriously consulting with the national authorities and ensuring their support (Christiansen and Hovland 2003, Jolly 2002, Rogerson et al. 2004, UN 2005).

The second critical narrative points at a lack of commitment to pro-development policies among the recipient governments. It attributes this lack of commitment and support on the national side to the failure of the donors to coordinate with each other and take a tougher stance in a consistent fashion, in negotiating and supervising the implementation of aid programmes (OECD/DAC 2003, Killick 2004, van de Walle 2005). As a result, the toughness of one donor is easily undermined by the ill-considered

² Google+ online interview following the 2012 State of the Union address, 24 January 2012, Washington DC.

³ For a detailed discussion of the new aid paradigm and its relation with the Millennium Development Goals agenda, see Renard's (2006) 'The Cracks in the New Aid Paradigm', Antwerp, Institute of Development Policy.

generosity of another, ‘creating a nurturing environment for bad policies and corruption’ (USAID 2000).

These potent criticisms of previous aid paradigms, along with the rise in aid expenditures, have led to experiments with new modalities and instruments. As a result, the traditional bilateral or multilateral project-based aid paradigm, and the structural adjustment paradigm prominent in the 1990s, have been superseded by the New Aid Agenda.⁴

Based on the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD/DAC 2005), the new aid paradigm makes two major prescriptions to correct the mistakes of the past⁵: First, it emphasizes the role of the national partner government and the importance of its involvement and support for the success of aid initiatives, resulting in improved ownership of these initiatives’ goals and outcomes. Second, it stresses the need for closer donor coordination, pursuing the goal of greater harmonization and alignment of actions.

⁴This paradigm is founded on a discourse of country ownership, partnership, and mutual accountability and the principles are embraced in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which was signed in March 2005 and includes a series of commitments from both donor and recipient countries to improve the quality of international development assistance. In a follow up, in 2008 the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness took place in Accra to help bring about agreement on the Accra Agenda for Action, which expresses the international community's commitment to further increase aid effectiveness based on Paris Declaration principles.

⁵The five overarching OECD aid effectiveness principles include ‘ownership’, ‘alignment’, ‘harmonization’, ‘managing for results’, and ‘mutual accountability’ (OECD 2005).

1.1 Key Research Puzzle and Relevant Literature

Today, the national government's involvement and support, and the donor coordination exercise are seen by development practitioners and academics as a matter of common sense, and as crucial components of successful aid programmes.

At the macro-economic level of policy design, resource mobilization, and funding, the importance of these two factors is uncontested. Indeed, the design of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)⁶ under the full responsibility of the government ensures that local economic, social and political contexts are taken into account, and that national development priorities are defined by the national government, leading to a greater sense of ownership of these programmes. Donors coordinate their support of the programmes under PRSPs through pooled funding. Ideally, this allows for reducing the chaos that can ensue in a situation where a multitude of donors work alongside each other, each guided by their own procedures and regulations.

However, little is known about the actual value added by the national government's support and the donor coordination exercise beyond the design and funding stages, i.e. at the operational micro-level of project implementation on the ground. Little systematic evidence has been produced on this question. This remains true although numerous accounts have chronicled the success and failure of aid projects

⁶ Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are produced locally, and are only later submitted for approval to the executive boards of the IMF and the World Bank. PRSPs represent the results and reforms the government itself has decided to enact and the donor is willing to finance, and are only later submitted for approval to the executive boards of the IMF and the World Bank.

(Dobbins 2007, USGAO 2003, UN 2005, USDOS 2005, Orr 2004), and although the topic has risen to prominence with the challenging experience in Afghanistan.

Given the volume of aid to countries in the aftermath of a civil war and/or military coups (Bourguignon and Sundberg 2007, Bourguignon et al. 2008), it is particularly important to test in a post-conflict setting whether the prescriptions of the new aid agenda turned out to matter in project implementation on the ground.

National government's support

Available studies attribute the utmost importance to national government support in ensuring project success. However, these are mostly qualitative accounts that mention this factor in a combination of prescriptions and suggestions that are derived from case-by-case best practices and observations of authors, but have not been constructed systematically, or tested empirically (Manor et al. 2007, Kaplan 2008, Ghani and Lockhart 2008, Kwak 2006).

Empirical research relevant to the subject of the national government's support for project success is very scarce. Israel (1987), in his study of institution building projects, analyzes 222 projects by the World Bank and concludes that *national commitment and support* plays an important positive role in project success. While the study has a sound methodological approach, its limitations lie in only covering projects implemented by a single agency, and not in a post-conflict setting.

Another study, by Narayan (1995), examines the success of rural water projects by the World Bank, and includes 121 aid-financed projects. The results of the study show that when projects had *national and local participation and support*, ‘62 percent of projects were successful, when not, only 10 percent of projects were successful’. The study by Narayan shares the shortcoming of the work by Israel (1987) in that its findings are based solely on projects implemented by a single agency, in a certain sector, and not focusing on a post-conflict setting.

Within the context of such under-developed state of the empirical research on the subject, my project seeks to assess the role of national government’s support based on the rich experience of a multitude of agencies in various sectors within the context of a post-conflict reconstruction and development.

In addition to analyzing a greater variety of projects implemented by various agencies in various sectors, my project also unpacks the concept of national government’s support. I look at what national government’s support means in concrete terms, and measure how much different components that form national government’s support matter based on first hand reports by development practitioners on the ground.

Donor coordination

The literature on donor coordination at either the *sector or project level*, describes it as 'by no means a simple matter in practice' (McKechnie 2002), 'even when there is cooperation at headquarters or at the policy level'⁷.

Authors who call for donor coordination cite its benefits in terms of reduced implementation costs of coordinated project and programmes, possibility of avoiding duplication, best practice and analysis exchange, unified approach to situation assessment and evaluation of success, and establishing common principles and approach in engaging with national governments.

Although they are few in number, there are also sources that point to the time and resource-consuming nature of donor coordination, given that various aid and development agencies work under differing political agendas, development philosophies and priorities, and have different administrative and bureaucratic mechanisms. Thus, the donor coordination exercise is not always a positive one, and can sometimes turn into a 'self-serving club' (WB/Markandya 2001).

The accounts of donor coordination cited above are purely qualitative, and the major question of whether the benefits of coordination at the level of project implementation outweigh its cost (in terms of time and effort) remains unanswered

⁷ High-level Open Symposium on Development Cooperation, Donor Coordination and the Effectiveness of Development Assistance, UNU Headquarters, Tokyo, 22 June 1998 (Owada 1998).

(Disch 1999, WB 1998, Bigsten 2005). In this context, my study aims to contribute to the discussion on donor coordination an empirical account of the actual role donor coordination plays in project success. Again, the concept of donor coordination at the stage of project implementation was unpacked into components, and measured as reported by development practitioners.

Table 1 and 1.1 present a summary of works on the role of the national government's support and the donor coordination exercise for reconstruction and development project success.

Table 1 – Analyses of the role of national government's support

Title / Author	Methodology used	Summary results
Manor et al. (2007)	Case study review	State the importance
Kaplan (2008)		
Ghani and Lockhart (2008)		
Kwak (2006)		
Israel (1987)	Quantitative analysis of 175 ex-post evaluations for 222 WB projects	Shows positive impact on project success
Narayan (1995)	Quantitative analysis of 121 WB projects	Shows positive impact on project success

Table 1.1 – Qualitative analyses of the role of donor coordination

OECD/DAC (2001)	State the importance
EC (2007)	
OECD/DAC (2007)	
CIDA (2004)	
DFID (2008a)	
Mining (2006)	
Rocha Menocal and Mulley (2006)	
HEUNI (2006)	
Sand (1996)	Point out negative aspects
Browne (2007)	
Thiele (2008)	
Taylor (2002)	
Stratmann (2000)	Points at related complications
OECD/DAC (2008a)	Points at possible complications

1.2 Research Parameters

A better understanding of project-level operations is important because specific projects in practice remain an aid delivery mechanism on the ground. i.e, even when aid funds are channeled through larger, overarching programmes such as national budget support, National Execution Modality (NEX)⁸, Trust Funds⁹, and Sector-wide Approach programmes¹⁰ under the PRSPs' national umbrella, these programmes are delivered by means of individual projects. Good policies will mean little if the projects and programmes through which they are delivered are implemented ineffectively. Aid and related projects are often seen by the donor community mainly as an instrument for conflict relapse prevention, 'winning the hearts and minds' of local population with the aim of better security and acceptance of foreign troops and promoting the legitimacy and support for the national government.

Yet, the improvement in people's lives brought by through successful reconstruction and development projects is an achievement important by itself. For instance for Afghanistan, the country of focus in this study, there is considerable evidence that development assistance in the aftermath of the conflict and during the past decade has directly contributed to some very positive development benefits,

⁸ Outlined in UNDP 2009 Afghanistan Programme Report (UNDP 2009a), the National Execution Modality (NEX), as opposed to Direct Execution (DEX), implies that aid funds are channeled through the national development budget (usually the Ministry of Finance), entrusting national counterpart agencies with fundamental fiduciary responsibilities involving financial planning, management, and procurement.

⁹ Trust Funds are partnerships between the international community and the national government, with donors contributing to the fund and the Management Committee making decisions on proposed allocations for reconstruction and development programs through the national budget, with national line ministries as implementing partners and responsible parties. See, for example, Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (Disch 2008), or the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF 2009).

¹⁰ A mechanism by which donors and development partners collaborate to support a sector's development or reform programmes that are based on a county's long-term vision for a certain sector. Partners act based on joint missions and through project-specific annual work programmes/budgets.

including decreases in infant and maternal mortality, dramatic increases in school enrollment for boys and girls, a dramatic decrease in malaria and tuberculosis prevalence, a media revolution, major improvements in roads and infrastructure, and greater connectivity through telecommunication networks, and impressive progress in disarmament and demining (UNDP 2009a, OECD 2008b, UNAMA 2010, WB 2008a). The fact that such development gains did not immediately translate into tangible security gains and success of the US - led military campaign in the country does not mean that aid and development efforts as a whole, and individual projects in particular, were a waste. Positive improvements and achievements of these projects in improving lives on the ground matter, even if the outcomes of the overarching state-building and counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan at the macro-level were not as successful as it was hoped, and should not be under-appreciated.

Moreover, and as astutely argued by Chesterman (2004, p.235), 'state-building after a war will always take years, perhaps decades, and it is disingenuous to suggest otherwise to domestic publics'. But the same is true when it comes to the expectations of international actors who are spearheading such efforts, and the constituencies in the donor countries, pointing to the need for allies and donors to manage domestic public opinion and avoid creating overambitious expectations.

As for the experience of unsuccessful projects, as painful and damaging as they were in terms of both image and financial losses, it was also a learning process, helping to

fine-tune and improve approaches to the design and implementation of future initiatives.

I therefore examine the practice of reconstruction and development project implementation from close range, with individual projects as the unit of analysis, and focusing in particular on aid to post-conflict societies as distinct from development aid in general. I analyze reconstruction and development projects designed and delivered in Afghanistan during 2002-2008, under a relatively weak partner government and public administration system. The latter, more often than not, characterize post-conflict states, and sharpen the importance of donor-recipient relationship dynamics (UNDP 2009a, ODI 2006, Rwangombwa 2004).

Analyzing the role of the national government's support and of donor coordination in effective reconstruction and development project implementation presents a methodological challenge. My contention is that the best way to approach it is to build and examine an explanatory model of project success in post-conflict conditions, based on comparable sets of aid projects with various implementation success rates.

In addition to imbuing this study's findings with greater objectivity than a purely qualitative account would, an explanatory model of project success also offers the advantage of systematically including other possible explanatory factors of project effectiveness in the field, in addition to the two factors - the national government's support and the donor coordination exercise - that have been central to the recent aid

effectiveness debate. This allowed me to undertake a deeper investigation of other factors that contribute to effective project implementation and make aid projects a success (and to control for other influences in determining the impact of national government's support and donor coordination factors).

The definition of effectiveness that this study employs in examining project implementation success, distinguishes between macro-level aid effectiveness with a positive impact on the growth of the national GDP vs. micro-level project implementation effectiveness that is assessed against the objectives, timelines, and resources set in the project document. The latter, i.e. the micro-level project implementation success is the criteria that this study takes as a departing point for the review, measurement, and statistical analysis of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development that this study undertakes.

Aiming to fill the gap in the existing literature, my research was guided by three key questions: 1) How important is the national government's support for project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development? 2) What role does donor coordination play for project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development? and 3) What other factors explain project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development?

1.3 Preview of Empirical Findings

The empirical findings of this study show that, even at the project implementation stage, it is indeed important to have the national government's support in order for projects to be successful. The analysis and interpretation of findings indicate that the degree of national support received is not static, but is rather of a reciprocal nature, and correlated to the degree of engagement and support from the international projects implementation team. With the 'Top management of the national partner agency' as the most frequent point of contact and interaction with the international project team, the degree and quality of the national counterparts interaction and support responds to capacity improvement efforts such as on the job coaching and mentorship, as well as national and international project staff co-location for joint performance of project activities.

Furthermore, those projects in which the national government's support is matched with strong project leadership (management) on the international side are more likely to succeed in achieving their reconstruction and development objectives. Strong project leadership, i.e. project manager or project coordinator, is essential in seizing the opportunity for success that strong national government's support presents. These results add to the existing literature an empirical account of the role of the national government's support at the project implementation stage.

As we will see in more detail in Chapter VII, there is a strong relationship between the degree of national government's support, quality of project leadership and project success.

A strong international project leader, who has sound relevant technical, administrative, and interpersonal skills, is important in making projects more successful 'by winning the respect of the national counterparts and establishing a state of mutual enforcement and accountability'¹¹, 'creating clearly-defined, structured processes'¹². Evidence to that is the empirical finding on the positive correlation between strong leadership and consistent monitoring and evaluation practice within the project.

In addition to conventional 'instrumental' elements of leadership such as technical, administrative and interpersonal skills, survey and semi-structured interview results also spoke to the importance of what could be referred to as the 'moral' elements of leadership (Doig and Hargrove eds. 1990, Bowles and Renwick 2009, Keohane 2010).¹³ Building a *good reputation and trust* and winning the *respect* of the national counterparts, as well as maintaining a mutually respectful working relationship, were mentioned by survey respondents as major components in the relationship and interaction that leads to successful project implementation. A good leader builds trust by 'meeting the national counterparts where they are in terms of their choice of policy

¹¹ Interview # 12 with international project management staff member, Kabul, 20 October 2009.

¹² Interview # 07 with national counterpart agency staff, Kabul, 15 October 2009.

¹³ As per Bowles and Renwick's (2009) categorization of policy formulation and implementation leadership into two broad types of 'moral' and 'instrumental', with each type using specific means and techniques.

design and implementation, and their ability to implement certain functions, even if these choices and abilities are not up to the international standards yet.’¹⁴

The *dedication* of the international project leader, and the *desire to make a difference*, which results in ‘greater enthusiasm and greater attention and dedication to the cause on the side of the national counterpart’¹⁵ is another factor crucial for project team cohesion and ultimate project success. These qualities of ‘moral’ leadership add to the definition of strong project leadership in the context of post-conflict reconstruction and development project implementation, and I presume, in the context of international aid and development as a whole.

The findings on donor coordination efforts undertaken at the project *implementation stage* are somehow counterintuitive. Contrary to the qualitative accounts in the literature, the results of statistical analysis show that coordination efforts among the donors did not prove to have a strong positive impact on a project’s success. Despite the lack of statistically robust correlation between donor coordination and project success however, these study does not argue that donor coordination per se is not important for effective project implementation. Instead, and as supported by the analysis of qualitative data of semi-structured interviews, I argue that in order to be effective, donor coordination efforts should be undertaken ex-ante (prior) to project implementation activities. Ex-ante coordination can be exercised through joint project design and consultations on the implementation approaches, and by concluding formal

¹⁴ Interview # 22 with international project management staff member, Kabul, 23 October 2009.

¹⁵ Interview # 16 with international project management staff member, Kabul, 21 October 2009.

collaboration agreements and partnerships among the agencies. If undertaken on an ad-hoc basis after the project has already been initiated, coordination efforts have little potential to change the set course and contribute to a positive outcome. Because the agencies involved have already set out their course of actions, post-initiation coordination efforts are usually ‘more time-consuming, but even after lengthy efforts, such coordination efforts do not necessarily lead to desired outcomes’¹⁶.

1.4 Modeling and Methodology

The explanatory model of project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development I have built to examine my research questions is rooted in existing research on the factors that drive projects success. Where my research goes beyond existing work is in collating a comprehensive set of success factors, and in making a sound quantitative assessment of their impact.

As suggested in the literature, in order to generate a theoretical framework on project effectiveness in a particular setting, and to verify the importance of a certain factor objectively, it is necessary to identify all of the variables in the domain of project implementation effectiveness, and have them tested in a comprehensive model. In designing this model, one needs to see how these project effectiveness variables are similar or related (Steers 1975) and then ‘weed out the overlap’, generalizations, and get down to core variables (Campbell 1977, p.13-55).

¹⁶ Based on accounts from semi-structured interviews with national and international development practitioners in Kabul, October 2009.

Two major streams of theoretical discourse relevant to project effectiveness in post-conflict field conditions that pervade the literature were relied upon in constructing the original model - the literature on *conventional project implementation* discusses implementation-related factors that influence project success in a regular modern business and policy environment, and the literature on *international reconstruction and development assistance* which discusses project implementation factors observed and relevant in post-conflict environment. This strain of literature adds the perspective that is missing in the first body of literature, and focuses on success factors relevant to post-conflict reconstruction and development projects in the field. It is, however, usually qualitative, and nowhere near comprehensive in the range of potential success factors it considers.

The second branch of literature, even if mainly qualitative, has been invaluable in pinpointing the factors that influence reconstruction and development project effectiveness on the ground, in contexts as diverse as Mozambique, Sudan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and Iraq (see for instance, Doyle and Sambanis 2010, Orr 2004, Dobbins et al. 2007, Westin 2003, UNDP 2009a, Ghani and Lockhart 2008, Paris 2004).

The literature does not suggest that the specificity of projects and the great variety of implementing environments renders impossible the attempt to give a generalizeable and comprehensive explanation of the role of national government's support and donor coordination in the successful implementation of reconstruction and

development projects. To the contrary, numerous authors attempt to draw conclusions and generalizations on these and other factors, even based on a purely qualitative approach, and without allowing for more than quite limited combinations of success factors. I am therefore unconcerned about tackling this challenge in what is arguably a more thorough and systematic manner.

Table 1.3 provides the list of factors derived from both sets of literature, illustrating the resonance between some of the factors from two sets of literature.

Table 1.3 – Factors influencing project success

	Conventional literature	Reconstruction and development assistance literature
1	Project mission / vision	Strategic vision
2	Project leadership	Strong leadership/management
3	Top-mangement support	Political and financial commitment of the donor
4	Client acceptance and support	Support of the national government
5	Communication	Donor coordination, including its aspects and the intensity/quality of coordination
6	Planning, monitoring and feedback	Plannig, monitoring and evaluation
7	Available technical expertise	Adequate personnel resources
8	Task complexity	Project complexity
9	Corruption	Corruption
10		Assistance from the PRTs
11		Rest and recuperation cycle
12		Secure environment
13		Scope of geographical coverage
14	Multicultural communication	Cultural factors
15		Economic factor

Based on the factors listed above, an explanatory model of reconstruction and development project effectiveness is designed (please see Figures 5.3 and 5.4 in Chapter V).

For empirical testing, I define a simple linear additive version of the model,

$$Y = \alpha X + \beta Z + \gamma A + \delta Z,$$

where Y is a measure of project effectiveness, X is a vector of project characteristics, Z is a vector of characteristics of the project environment, and A is a vector containing characteristics of the survey respondents.

I test this model using an original data set covering projects by major multilateral and bilateral aid agencies active in Afghanistan (UN, WB, EC, USAID, DFID, JICA) that were completed and have an independent project evaluation¹⁷. The period covered is 2002 – 2008, i.e. from the moment the interim government took power in late 2001, and until the time this study was begun.

The data set combines two sources of information. Firstly, it draws upon ex-post project evaluation reports to obtain an objective assessment of project implementation success rating (dependent variable). Secondly, it complements the data from evaluation reports with information on factors that influence project success (independent variables) collected in a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews with development practitioners in Afghanistan.

Some of the reasons that current authors cite as hampering research into the reconstruction and development project effectiveness question include the difficulty in defining and quantifying the national government's support to aid projects, and measuring objectively donor coordination exercise.

I address these concerns by unpacking the concepts of the national government's support and donor coordination into practical terms as they apply to project

¹⁷ An independent evaluation is the most reliable indicator of project success or failure, and hence is indispensable for this study.

implementation process on the ground, and measure them using ordinal or interval level indicators, which allows tracing carefully the change in the dependent variable of project success associated with the change in independent variables of national government's support and donor coordination.

Other project success factors are measured similarly, through questions consisting of subcategories, reflecting the complexity of the factor in question, and providing a detailed insight into the value of each component of a factor. My complete questionnaire survey instrument is attached in Annex 1.

1.5 Objective and Structure of the Dissertation

The research presented here is (to my knowledge) the first study of success and failure in aid projects that investigates in a quantitative fashion the role of national government's support and donor coordination together with a multitude of other possible explanatory factors of project success, and in the context of a diverse set of projects. As such, the study offers new insights into the patterns of successful project implementation in post-conflict field conditions. Positioned at the crossroads of the disciplines of political science and public administration, this study attempts to reveal what political and operational factors have impeded or aided the reconstruction and development effort on the ground, and to show their interrelations based on first-hand project implementation experience in Afghanistan.

The chief objective of the dissertation is to contribute to the literature on and theory of post-conflict reconstruction and development. My other goal is to inform the practice of aid delivery under the New Aid Agenda by identifying the key factors that policy-makers and aid practitioners in the field could take into account in order to improve the likelihood of success in the implementation of reconstruction and development projects.

It is therefore no coincidence that the study was undertaken on the basis of the rich experience of aid to post-conflict Afghanistan. Within the project portfolio in Afghanistan, there is a wide gulf between projects that turned out to be successful in delivering aid and those that failed, which provides a perfect case for the analysis of international post-conflict reconstruction and development assistance politics and administration considerations.

The dissertation is organized in the following manner. In the next chapter, Chapter II, I briefly review the experience of international intervention and post-conflict reconstruction and development initiatives undertaken since 1989, evaluating the circumstances under which such interventions took place, their commonalities and intrinsic characteristics, and lessons learned. Following this overarching review of experiences in international post-conflict interventions, I zoom into the specific case of Afghanistan, providing contextual background and analyzing the circumstances under which aid programmes were designed and undertaken. Chapter III opens with a review of the aid expert epistemic community and related discourse on the concept of aid

effectiveness at macro and micro levels, identifying the measure of aid project effectiveness this study is going to employ. Chapter III continues with the review of the literature on project effectiveness as relevant to the implementation of international aid projects, as well as the review of empirical evidence on the subject. Chapter IV is dedicated to a detailed qualitative consideration of the implementation process for three reconstruction and development programmes undertaken in Afghanistan by various development agencies, with varying level of success. This chapter brings us closer to the actual implementation process of aid projects, illustrating various approaches to project design and implementation, and how certain factors influence the ultimate performance of the project in terms of achieving its set objectives. These three particular experiences set the stage for a more systematic, large-N quantitative analysis of project implementation factors vs. project success, which begins in Chapter V. Chapter V provides definitions, and outlines an explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development that was designed based on the literature review and my personal experience of serving with the UN in Afghanistan. In the same chapter, I also outline a series of testable hypotheses and explain the methodology I plan to use in testing these hypotheses.

Chapter VI outlines operational definitions of independent variables that are used in the study, the descriptive statistics for these variables, and various data transformations that are required for the analyses that follow. This chapter presents a deliberately detailed account on the quality of the data on which this study relies on,

providing the operational definitions for variables as they were unpacked into several components. In Chapters VII and VIII, the explanatory model and hypotheses developed in Chapter V are tested empirically in order to identify the determinants of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development. These two chapters also utilize the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews to illustrate the numbers with real life experience of successful and less successful project implementation experiences, and identify practices that development practitioners can adopt to improve project effectiveness in post-conflict field conditions.

The last Chapter IX summarizes the findings, addresses certain methodological issues and concerns, and offers some direction for further research on the subject of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

CHAPTER II

Aid in Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development

In this Chapter, I briefly review the recent history of international intervention and aid, analyzing what contextual political, geographic, socio-economic and humanitarian circumstances and conditions determine the size and scope of intervention and aid programmes in a given country. I also consider the theoretical limitations of international interventions, as well as practical and operational factors that play role in the effective implementation of aid programmes and projects on the ground. In the section dedicated to the particular case of international intervention and aid to Afghanistan, I discuss how these overarching political and humanitarian conditions shaped the international aid effort. I also review what intrinsic domestic characteristics pertaining to security, institutions, governance, and inter-ethnic relations and culture shaped the environment in which aid programmes were implemented in Afghanistan, and which directly or indirectly influenced the success of these aid programmes.

2.1 International intervention and aid to post-conflict situations – a brief review of the experience to date

International intervention by the world's leading powers and governing bodies into the affairs of a sovereign state that finds itself in a state of conflict, and/or humanitarian and political crisis, is motivated by a host of reasons and serves various purposes of the players involved. Some nations believe it is important to promote liberal peace abroad so

that their domestic democratic order and values are not endangered by rogue regimes – the states that are ruled by authoritarian regimes that severely restrict human rights, sponsor terrorism, and seek to gain weapons of mass destruction, thus representing threat to international peace and security (see for instance, Tanter 1999)¹⁸.

Others are motivated by the humanitarian imperatives of internationalism and multilateralism, and by the principles of the 'Responsibility to Protect'.¹⁹ The necessity to restore peace, law and order in weak, post-conflict states, so that their land does not become, or ceases to be, a safe haven for international terrorism, is another major argument used to justify intervention. More often than not, all of the above arguments are used in the decision-making process leading to intervention, and used by governments and politicians in justifying such decisions to their constituencies, since a decision to intervene entails that leading and coalition nations make substantial expenditures from their national budgets.

There is a distinction between 'international multinational forces' authorized by the UN Security Council and a so-called 'coalition of the willing' created by military

¹⁸ In a study of 14 peace-building operations launched between 1989 and 1999, Paris (2004) argues that the design and practice of these operations was based on the expectation that democratization would move internal conflicts from the battlefield and into the peaceful arena of electoral politics. Paris states that there is a large body of academic thought (starting with John Locke) arguing that democracies are less likely than countries governed under other systems to attack each other.

¹⁹ A policy paper by an international commission of experts submitted to the UN in 2001 entitled "The Responsibility to Protect" made the case for international intervention in cases of human rights violations and humanitarian emergencies when governments cannot or do not fulfill their obligation to protect their people. Under such concept, international law and the great powers of international politics have recognized both the rights of citizens and a specific relationship between the government and its citizens: a relationship of protection, changing the nature of sovereignty has changed: legitimate governments are defined not only by their control of a territory and a population but also by how they exercise that control. If they fail in that obligation, the international community has the responsibility to protect those citizens (UN ICISS 2001). A follow-up study "A Duty to Prevent" by Slaughter and Feinstein (2004) built upon the ideas in the earlier paper but made the case for preemptive intervention for security reasons. Robert Keohane (Benneth 2011) appraised R2P, first supported explicitly by the United Nations in 2006, as 'one of the most imaginative and best acts of the UN in the last decade'.

allies for operations not authorized by the Security Council²⁰, such as for instance the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia and the US-led operations in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The difference between Security Council – authorized intervention and an intervention by the allied forces mainly reflects on the consequent degree of the legitimacy of the mandate and the ensuing state-building agenda.

The use of preventive force by both multilateral and unilateral forces is a contentious matter in international politics. Buchanan and Keohane (2004, p. 2) identify four major positions in the current debate on preventive force: 1) The Just War Blanket Prohibition, the most prevalent view in the just war tradition, which holds that the use of preventive force is strictly forbidden, until there is a clear fact of war or obvious intentions to start a war²¹. 2) The Legal Status Quo view, under which preventive use of force is generally prohibited in contemporary international law, unless a collective authorization by the UN Security Council was given²². 3) The National Interest, a view expressed mainly by realists, posits that states may do whatever their leaders deem necessary to serve the best interests of the state. And 4), a position the authors call the Expanded Right of Self-Defense, which stems from the Bush administration's National

²⁰ The legality of such unilateral intervention is often questioned, given that the UN Charter prohibits the use of force, except in the cases of self-defense and for the enforcement of actions authorized by the Security Council. A frequent justification given for a right of unilateral humanitarian intervention is based on the grounds of inadequacy of collective security mechanisms such as the Security Council. Chesterman (2004, p. 255), for instance, argues that it is because of the inconsistency with which the Council performed its primary responsibility for international peace and security, and the dependence of Council's enforcement actions on the willingness of certain key states to carry these actions out, that the Council's role was marginalized, best demonstrated by the US use of force in Iraq. Unilateral enforcement is not a substitute but the opposite of collective action, argues Chesterman. Though often presented as the only alternative to inaction, relying on such a right of unilateral intervention would be incoherent as a principle, and thus would lead to misuse of such interventions (to promote the unilateral interests of intervening countries), and it would be counter to the coherent enforcement of international rule of law.

²¹ Force may sometimes be justified in cases in which an attack has not already occurred but is obviously imminent.

²² Article 2(4) of the UN Charter (UN 1945) requires "all states" to refrain "from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, "unless authorized by the Security Council (Articles 39,42,48) or in self-defense against an armed attack (Article 51).

Security Strategy and expands the definition of self-defense to include preventive action. Buchanan and Keohane argue that all four of these views have flaws and do not provide an adequate model for governing the preventive use of force in the system of international relations. They write that adhering to the first position may be too risky in the face of prevalent clandestine capacities of state and non-state actors. The second principle, while the most suitable, has flaws in the decision-making and institutionalizing of the use the use of force , particularly in case of preventive use of force. The third position may lead to easy and excessive resort in the use of force and also neglects the fact that intervention might be required to help the people in countries other than your own. Reliance on the forth position of states using force on the basis of their own estimate that they may be attacked in the future, would make the use of force too subject to abuse and error.

The recent history of international interventions shows that most of the interventions that took place between 1989 and 2003 followed an armed conflict, mostly a civil war²³. With the first major post-conflict operation in Namibia in 1989, in the following 15 years there was a total of 16 large peace-building interventions undertaken by international or alliance forces around the world (Paris 2004)²⁴. As Dobbins et al. (2007, p.189) argue, the prime objective of most post-conflict interventions and following nation-building missions ‘is to make violent societies peaceful, not to make

²³ All but seven out of the 110 conflicts recorded during this time were civil wars (WB 2002).

²⁴ Angola (1991), Cambodia (1991), El Salvador (1991), Mozambique (1992), Liberia (1993), Rwanda (1993), Bosnia (1995), Croatia (1995), Guatemala (1997), East Timor (1999), Kosovo (1999), Sierra Leone (1999), Afghanistan (2002), Ivory Coast (2003), Liberia (2003), Iraq (2003).

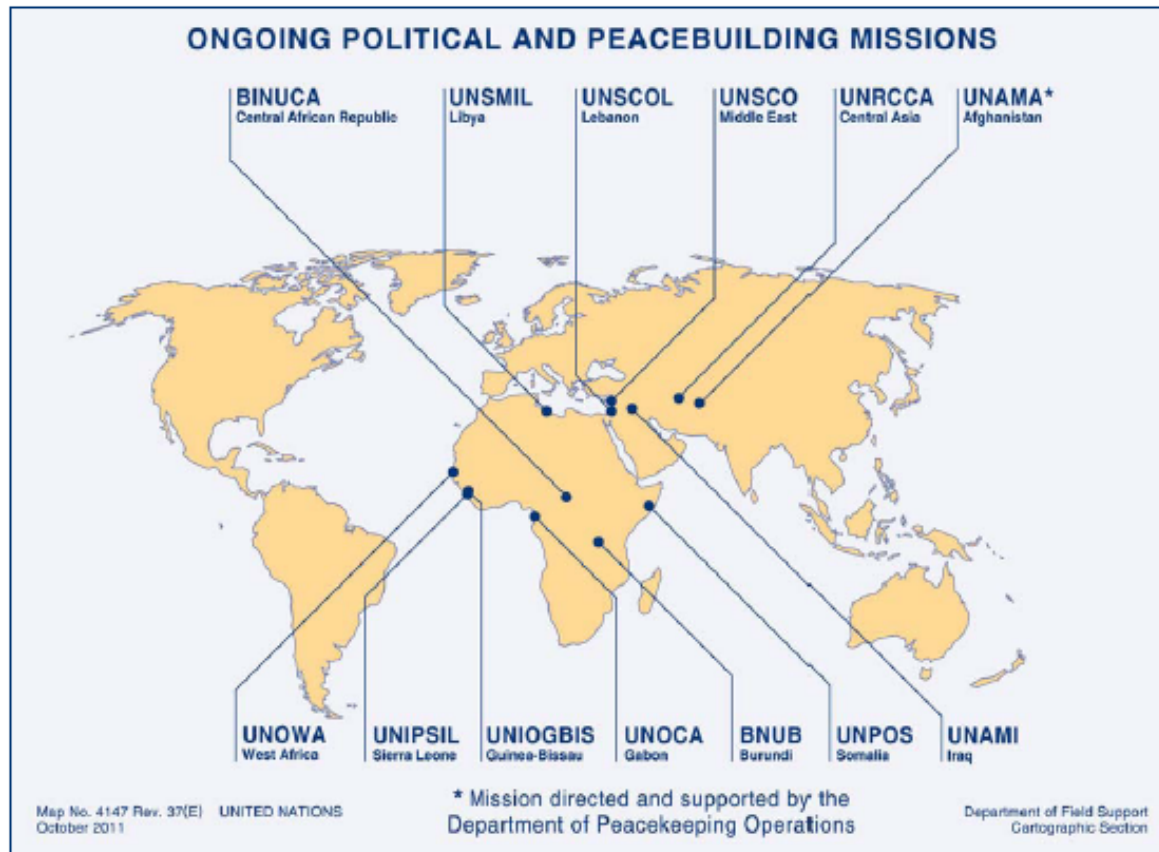
poor societies prosperous or authoritarian societies democratic. Nevertheless, the three are interconnected. Successful transformations of violent societies into peaceful ones are thus almost always accompanied by some degree of political reform and economic development’.

In addition to interventions preceded by a military invasion, the mitigation and relief in the case of smaller-scale conflicts, where appropriate, is addressed through the deployment of non-military UN Security Council-mandated political missions and peace-building support offices engaged in conflict relapse prevention, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. As of December 2011, there were 13 such missions, including in Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East (Figure 2.1). Political missions are part of a continuum of UN peace operations working at different stages of conflict prevention and management. In some instances, following the signing of peace agreements, political missions overseen by the UN Department of Political Affairs during the stage of peace negotiations have been replaced by the UN peace-keeping missions. In other instances, UN peacekeeping operations have given way to special political missions overseeing longer term state-building and development activities.²⁵

²⁵ UN Department of Political Affairs, http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/about/field_operations

Figure 2.1

UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING MISSIONS



Source: UN Department of Political Affairs, 2011

First of all, the nature and scope of international interventions are influenced by political trends surrounding the decision to intervene. Partnership ties and relationship dynamics between intervening (and non-intervening) allies, as well as between the intervening allies and the recipient state, reflect on the nature and parameters of the intervention. Each particular case therefore needs to be considered and evaluated with the specific political background in mind. The war-to-peace transition reflects the

varying political circumstances of intervention. Following peace negotiations, or military intervention, the state-building process involves intermediaries and stakeholders. Depending on the underlying circumstances, the transition cases differ markedly.

For instance, relying on the accounts of international interventions mentioned above, we see that some countries, such as El Salvador and Guatemala, settled for peace between the government and opposition faction in conflict through UN-brokered negotiations, others, such as Cambodia, Angola²⁶, Burundi, Haiti, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, through mediation by a third party not involved in the conflict (Camisar et al 2005, Bercovitch et al 2010). In Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan, and Iraq²⁷ the transition to peace began after a military invasion. In case of invasions not sanctioned by the Security Council, in order to allow the UN to lead international assistance following the military actions, the creation of a UN mission was sanctioned by the Security Council at a later stage (UNMIK: Kosovo, UNAMA: Afghanistan, UNAMI: Iraq) (Cuttillo 2007).

Second, some of the countries (Kosovo, East Timor) were not even independent at the time of intervention. In these cases, the UN Security Council unprecedentedly mandated international administrations. Under these arrangements, the UN mission, headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), performed the executive and legislative functions, while other international agencies (bilateral and

²⁶ Although the signing of a negotiated agreement does not necessarily translate into durable peace.

²⁷ In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the US, the US government's 'war on terror' led to US-led military interventions in Afghanistan in October 2001, and Iraq in March 2003.

multilateral) helped maintain the economic management, public administration and social services functions that had previously been performed by sovereign governments (Caplan 2005, Tansey 2009, Doyle et al. 2010, del Castillo 2008).

Third, in transitions from conflict and chaos to peace and stability, the new national authorities need to consolidate their *legitimacy*. In some cases, legitimacy may require power-sharing government coalitions: the international community often argues in favor of creating such coalitions in the attempt to engage all conflicting factions in the peace process. In other cases, interim or transitional authorities need to be established.

In Afghanistan, an interim government was installed soon after the military intervention, while Iraq was first governed by the Coalition Provisional Authority (with the heavy involvement of the US), later replaced by Iraqi interim government. In Afghanistan, and even more so in Iraq, the involvement of the UN was surpassed by the extensive engagement of the US²⁸, reflecting on the legitimacy of foreign military and development efforts.

Fourth, and overall, the decision and design of international interventions should take into account two important aspects - the need for a 'coherent opposition group that will be capable of leading the country in a more decent manner' than the rule that is

²⁸ Nye (2002) in this context wrote that the US intervention in Afghanistan is not a proof that unilateralism works, and it would be a mistake to conclude from the case of Afghanistan that such unilateral formula can fit all sizes. 'The US is so large that these crucial problems cannot be solved without the US', but US is not large enough to solve them alone. Lessons from Afghanistan, the Boston Globe, March 16, 2002.

being removed²⁹, and a clearly defined *exit strategy*. Caplan (2005, p.212-218) writes that the question of exit and the transfer of power to local authorities is pertinent to all types of operations where a third-party intervention in a territory lead to this third party performing any of the functions of a sovereign state. He demonstrates that on the one hand, holding the elections and the creation of a new national government does not signify the presence of the conditions which would consolidate the fragile peace and under which the international presence and support could cease – international assistance is required well beyond the initial elections. The resistance of the local population and ongoing calls for the removal of foreign presence and the scope and duration of follow-up arrangements for international presence on the other hand can make the issue of exit very contentious.

Finally, and as argued by Stewart and Knaus (2011, p.25), the experience of international interventions suggests a few rules of thumb, such as that the ‘interveners must distinguish brutally between the factors they can control, the dangers they can avoid, and the dangers they can neither control nor avoid’, let those be permanent features of the country or specifics of the crisis. These authors argue that, while the international community indeed should provide generous resources, manpower, equipment, and encouragement, it is important to invest heavily in learning the specifics of the local context, *particularly after the intervention*, and to avoid setting abstract goals. They also believe that the role of local leaders is more influential than is assumed,

²⁹ Robert Keohane lecture at Cornell University discussing criteria for military intervention in weak countries, 13 October 2011, Cornell Chronicle Online.

and that only local leaders possess the knowledge and insight of the situation required to avoid the dangers and pitfalls of intervention an outsider would not be able to avoid.

Definitions, theoretical limitations, and structural challenges

Peace-building is distinct from peace-making. Peace-making brings politicians around the table to find a consensus on a power-sharing and peace deal. Peace-building is also different from peace-keeping, which is aimed at mainly observing and maintaining a truce, separating warring parties, and protecting civilians in conflict zones. Peace-building goes beyond either of these and implies 1) the establishment of a democratic regime, and 2) reconstruction and development initiatives in the economic and social spheres. The efforts in pursuit of democratization are closely linked and interdependent with the efforts towards reconstruction and development.

Peace-building is often called 'state-building' or 'nation-building' (see, for instance, Dobbins et al 2003, Tansey 2007, CGD 2004).³⁰ Although Brahimi (2007, p.6) argues that the use of both 'peace-building' and 'nation-building' in reference to development efforts in post-conflict states is misleading. The term peace-building does not encompass fully the tasks that must be carried out in order to reconstitute a viable and functioning state, while the term nation-building is based mainly on the American experience of constructing a new identity in a land of new settlement without deeply

³⁰ Tansey (2007, p.634) argues that both terms give too broad an umbrella for actual programs and activities undertaken under the name of either peace-building or state-building, which makes a systematic evaluation of the success of such efforts difficult. Instead, he uses the term democratic regime-building, a political and institution-building component of an intervention, in order to assess objectively the experience and the outcomes of regime-building efforts in Kosovo.

rooted peoples, cultures and traditions (Fukuyama 2006, p.3)³¹. Moreover, given the often mixed ethnic and religious landscape of post-conflict states (which in fact is often one of the major reasons for conflict), promoting national identity in the early post-conflict stages might be problematic. The term state-building, which implies an overcoming of ethnic sentiment, seems to be more appropriate, in that in promoting a functioning democratic system of governance, it puts the main emphasis not on a national identity but on a state that provides a framework for coexistence of several nations (Fukuyama 2004, Orr 2004). The term state-building also seems to better reflect the nature and range of activities implied, even though the use of the term is not limited to countries emerging from conflict, and is usually not used in UN jargon (Cutillo 2007).

When it comes to delivery of aid and state-building efforts, the approach adopted by international players during early interventions and up until the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness³² was that the process would be led by the international stakeholders involved. Such top-down state-building was later revised on the basis of the experience gained from previous concrete cases. An increasingly accepted view within the international aid community nowadays is that state-building should be a bottom-up, indigenous process, and is primarily the responsibility of national actors (ODI 2006, OECD/DAC 2008a, DFID 2008b, UN 2009a). ‘Ownership’ has become a term used in most (if not all) strategies and programs, stressing the leading

³¹ Fukuyama writes that nations cannot be built, especially not by foreigners descending on a country for a short period of time. Nations emerge through an unplanned historical-evolutionary process.

³² The Declaration, adopted in Paris in 2005 (OECD/DAC 2005), promotes five mutually reinforcing principles of ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability.

role of the national authorities in pursuing both the political and reconstruction development components of state-building. In practice, such ownership and support of the national government often proves difficult to attain, for various reasons discussed in more detail further in this study. Where achieved, the implementation of programs still requires the heavy involvement (covert and overt) of international players.

In addition to the challenges posed by the environment and circumstances on the ground, analysts of international interventions and state-building argue that the difficulty to attain national ownership of aid programmes is partly rooted in inherent contradictions and limitations of liberal internationalism, i.e. the contradiction between the principles of (national) ownership and self-government vs. (international) control (Sisk et al. 2009). On one hand, the international aid community wants to promote the principle of national ownership; on the other hand, it has to make the process of reconstruction and development accountable. Moreover, the demand for the national government to be accountable to donors in turn competes with the fundamental principle of democratization – the accountability of the government to its people.

Similarly, there is tension between the provision of aid (which often leads to aid dependence, especially at early stages of state-building process) and self-sustainability of the national government desired by foreign donors.

Numerous authors argue that there is a contradiction between effective state-building and legitimacy. The democratic state-building agenda conflicts with traditional sources of authority that are based on religion and ethnic allegiance (see, for instance,

Suhrke 2010) As a result, the legitimacy of a newly established liberal government is being derived from the benefits and protection that the government commits to deliver to its citizens; it thus enters into a 'social contract' with its people. Compared to traditional sources, this legitimacy is harder to develop since it does not rely on force and preexisting acceptance, but rather has to prove itself repeatedly.

In cases of UN transitional administration of post-conflict territory, the ultimate goal of developing potent national government institutions conflicts with the reality in which such transitional administration assumes some or all of the sovereign powers of a state, even if only on a temporary basis. Chesterman (2004, p.127) questions the striving to establish a legitimate, sustainable national government by means of 'benevolent foreign autocracy under UN (or US) auspices'. He argues that such contradiction between means and ends undermined recent efforts to create viable post-conflict governments in the Balkans, East Timor, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Moreover, democratization efforts in internationally administered territories are inherently limited by sometimes competing priorities of various international players, by the nature of domestic elites and the balance of power, and by the fact that the international administration is unelected, with no domestic oversight mechanisms, in contradiction with the very principles this administration is trying to enforce. As a result, the elimination of authoritarian options of rule through democratic regime-building efforts in internationally administered territories does not guarantee that democratization as a

whole would be successful upon the withdrawal of international administration (Tansey 2009, p.215).

Similarly, there is sometimes a contradiction between effective democratization and maintaining post-conflict security status quo. For instance, Paris (2004) argues that economic and political liberalization do not suit and may even be counterproductive in post-conflict peace-building: they may destabilize the fragile balance of peace while the political and economic system is liberalized. Instead, Paris recommends a strategy which he calls 'institutionalization before liberalization'. Along with many like-minded authors, Paris supports a gradual and controlled state-building in which domestic institutions capable of managing the transition are established first to mitigate the destabilizing effects of democratization and the free market system.

In addition to political and tactical considerations and theoretical challenges discussed above, the nature and shape of the state-building project is defined by the economic, social and geographic conditions under which the international intervention takes place. Systemic and structural challenges related to a country's *social and economic context* also influence the practical implementation of the intervention and the following aid programme. This is because different degrees of economic and social development on the ground imply different needs, as well as different capacities to process and absorb aid programs (UNDP 2009a). Different degrees of damage caused by conflict and sanctions would make programs designed for Afghanistan and Iraq different

from ones undertaken in the countries where conflict had been less protracted and widespread.

Financial indicators in the country of intervention are also important determinants of the size of the international assistance. For instance, the size of assistance to poor countries will be different from that offered to relatively rich countries with natural resources. If the country has a large national debt to the international financial institutions (IFIs), this might need to be addressed before these institutions continue to provide financial assistance. Often, increasing the chances of successfully jump-starting national economies, particularly in poor post-conflict countries, requires debt forgiveness by donors.

The *regional context* of conflicts also plays a role in what shape and size the aid programme for a certain country will take. Regional dynamics reflect on the process of transition to peace, on the nature of the state institutions in a region, and on the relative interest of external actors in supporting such state-building efforts. The levels of financial and technical assistance are directly linked to a country's geo-political importance, which creates a large variation across cases in aid levels. For example, given the geographical proximity to them and the gravity of the situation in Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, European donors considered it important to actively engage and support the transition and recovery in these countries. At the same time, the attention and support rendered by donors to some African countries in similarly dire

conditions, was far from adequate, because these countries ‘were in no large donor’s ‘backyard’” (del Castillo 2008, p.10).

Violence, armed insurgency, and humanitarian problems often last long after the negotiated settlement. Because peace processes are the consequence of violence, the implementation of peace processes can be as violence-ridden as early phases of peace negotiations, continuing to influence the outcome of peace processes even after the signing of peace agreements (Sisk 2009, p.77).

Conditions of continued *humanitarian crises* require substantial initial infusions of emergency aid for humanitarian relief will have to precede any kind of reconstruction and development programs. Depending on the degree of alleviation needed in such humanitarian crises, the provision of aid might need to continue alongside reconstruction and development activities. Such pockets of insurgency, particularly in remote areas beyond the reach of the government authority, might create conditions for illegal activities that destabilize security and formal economy. Opium cultivation in the southern provinces of Afghanistan, which are plagued by insurgency and barely under the control of the central government, is one such example.

Reconstruction and development as a tool for conflict prevention

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing recognition among the international actors of the socio-economic causes of violent conflict. Moreover, evidence shows that one reason for conflict relapse is that the same poverty and low income indicators that

caused the initial war are usually still present several years after the end of the conflict. As a result, low income countries typically face a high likelihood of reverting to conflict within five years of the ending of a prior conflict, with such probability doubling to fifty percent within ten years (WB 2003, Collier 2005). Reducing this risk means investing in socio-economic areas as part of an overall peace-building strategy that simultaneously tackles the crucial political and security issues that sometimes receive more attention and resources (ECOSOC 2009).

With this line of logic, post-conflict economic and social reconstruction and development is seen by the international aid community as a major tool for preventing conflict relapse and improving the legitimacy of the newly established government. Authors argue that there is a two-way causality between security and reconstruction, and that jump-starting economic recovery can be one of the greatest bolsters of security, which provides the engine for future stability and peace. The interdependence of success in political reform and economic development in turn pointed at the intrinsic linkage of solutions and measures needed to achieve both (see for instance Pronk 1997, Rubin et al. 2003b).

International organizations and donor countries therefore attempt to develop a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, peace-building and development in both post-conflict and fragile states, with increasing importance being attached to long-term development in post-conflict countries and to their re-integration into the global economy. The World Bank, for instance, set up in 2002 the LICUS (Low Income

Countries under Stress) initiative to support poor countries with weak policies.³³ All countries covered by this initiative are considered as conflict-prone³⁴, although not all of them have a history of conflict (WB 2006c).

Post-conflict and fragile countries indeed have many characteristics in common.³⁵ However, pursuing economic and social improvement is more difficult in post-conflict situations than in poor but peaceful countries, given the additional set of problems stemming from the conflict. Ex-soldiers need to be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated so that they are engaged as peaceful civilians. Returning refugees need a legal process to claim their land and homes back. Institutions in post-conflict situations usually lack competent specialists and administrators, army and police do not have proper facilities, equipment and training. The areas of military actions should be cleared of mines. Economic and social capacities destroyed in the conflict need to be rebuilt. All these unresolved problems of conflict aftermath require attention simultaneously.

³³ The main objective of the initiative was to assist the countries where the usual development policies (including the adoption of PRSP) did not succeed, leading to the situation when donors, including the World Bank, have withdrawn from most of these countries.

³⁴ Countries to be included in the LICUS are identified by the World Bank on the basis of an indicator of economic policy quality, the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, which is based on four indicators of macroeconomic, structural, social, and public sector management quality. The maximum score, indicating the best policies, is 5.

³⁵ Del Castillo (2008, p.31) provides an insightful account of similarities between the characteristics and the state of economy of post-conflict and fragile states. These include the following. 1) Devastated or at least severely distorted economies. Both human capital and physical infrastructure are often severely disorganized. Statist and populist policies of the past may have led to major macroeconomic imbalances that often require tough stabilization policies and structural reform. 2) Lack of transparency, poor governance, corrupt legal, judicial, and police systems, inadequate protection of property rights, incompetent central banks, weak tax and customs administrations, and non-credible public expenditure management. Furthermore, the rule of law frequently remains tenuous, with continued violations of human rights. 3) High dependence on official aid flows, mostly in the form of grants. This dependency is particularly strong immediately after the resolution of the conflict and at the early stages of what often proves to be a long and difficult transition to peace. 4) Fourth, post-conflict countries often have protracted arrears on payments of foreign debt. Thus, the provision of financial aid is constrained by the need to normalize relations with creditors, particularly with the IFIs, which have restrictions on assisting countries that are in arrears. In addition, post-conflict countries usually require relief on unsustainable external-debt burdens.

The initial post-conflict period in most countries is characterized by significant insecurity and political uncertainty (Sisk et al. 2009). The state-building process is undertaken against the backdrop of volatility or continued insurgency and violence in parts of the country, and recurrent militant attacks, often targeting governmental authorities and foreign military and aid workers. Conditions of ongoing insecurity put an even greater emphasis on the tension between immediate needs and long-term development.

Insecurity as a backdrop of state-building process makes the tensions and contradictions within the theory of liberal internationalism even more prominent, as insecurity demands faster results, and hence more external control and greater presence of international donors and aid agencies. Given such competing priorities, the sequencing of efforts is neither possible nor advisable. But the choice of the issues to be implemented in parallel and even more so their coherent implementation is a challenging task. The guiding principle in this task is addressing the security needs in order to prevent relapse into conflict, as well as addressing people's immediate needs to build confidence in the peace process.

Such needs in a post-conflict setting are addressed through the economic and social reconstruction and development component of state-building. However, while it is widely acknowledged that economic development is central to reducing the likelihood of conflict relapse, applying conventional tools of development strategy, such as for instance privatization and market access, are not sufficient, or even appropriate.

Substantial initial infusions in the shape of grants, capacity building, and infrastructure development are required to promote entrepreneurship and new businesses. Major international development institutions acknowledge that development strategies such as *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers* should look different in countries with a history of conflict, addressing the factors that affect the risk of conflict relapse in the short and long-term (for instance WB 2003, Orr 2004, Collier 2009).

Because peace is a precondition for sustainable development, and because avoiding conflict relapse is the first and overarching goal of the state-building agenda, all actors recognize and accept that political priorities will often constrain development efforts. In other words, if there is tension between the imperative of maintaining the fragile balance of peace and certain development objectives, the imperative of peace will be given priority. As a result, economic policies (such as privatization) which would be optimal under most other circumstances are not immediately possible or even desirable (see earlier argument by Paris 2004). Such dominance of the peace imperative translates into less than optimal developmental decisions, and, needless to say, reflects on related budget provisions.

Given the dominance of the imperative to maintain peace in post-conflict economic reconstruction and development, the success of reconstruction and development activities as a whole, and of particular development projects, cannot be measured solely on economic, financial and social indicators, as in the case of development activity in developing and fragile situations (Ausenda 2003, ECOSOC

2009, UNDP 2009a). The success should be assessed by considering whether, and to what extent, such reconstruction and development efforts contribute to national reconciliation and the consolidation of peace, thereby allowing the country eventually to enter the normal development process.

Dissatisfaction with the success of reconstruction and development programs is in part justified, and in part is caused by usually high expectations for the delivery of concrete political, social and economic dividends once the conflict ends. In some cases, most recently in Afghanistan, aid practitioners agree that already high expectations were further exacerbated by the public relations and communications strategies of most national and international institutions. Media attention was mainly dedicated to positive events and achievements, generous donor contributions, and big plans, and little was said about the challenges that were emerging in the implementation of aid programmes.

As a result, what people learned from TV and radio news, did not match with what they often saw in reality. In a recent study, Fishstein and Wilder (2011, p.42) argue that few efforts were made to communicate to Afghans the enormous challenges and time needed to make significant progress in rebuilding a country that was among the poorest in the world, even before it was devastated by three decades of conflict.

Challenges were underplayed and glossed over because they might undercut the 'good news' narrative. Communications strategies that raised rather than lowered expectations help in part explain why, 'despite newly paved roads, schools, and clinics, extensive cell phone networks, a vibrant media, none of which existed when the

Taliban regime was removed from power in the fall of 2001, Afghans frequently express the view that “nothing has been done”.

Major actors and their legitimacy

Issues related to the mandates, legitimacy, and competencies of the different organizations involved in providing assistance have been critical to the peace transitions in general, and to economic reconstruction in particular. Inadequate mandates, insufficient expertise, poor governance and a lack of legitimacy have been present in different degrees in all recent experiences with post-conflict reconstruction.

The type and the number of international bilateral and multilateral organizations involved in post-conflict reconstruction and development has increased exponentially over the last decade. Reconstruction and development actors include missions mandated by the Security Council or General Assembly which are supported by specialized UN programs and agencies. Additionally, Bretton Woods institutions, IFIs, development organizations, bilateral and regional donors, and often a large number of non-governmental organizations, are involved in addressing various aspects of the state-building agenda. Traditional development actors are now joined by civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams as well as private companies. Comments on the great number of international organizations and donors and the weak level of coordination among them are ubiquitous in the literature.

Despite the shortcomings of the Security Council as a mechanism for a uniform approach in dealing with all conflicts in the world, the Council remains the strongest political mechanism for debate and decision-making on matters of global peace and security. Broad international political support for intervention and the transition to peace is best created through this mechanism. Peace-building mandates issued by the Security Council possess the greatest legitimacy an international military intervention and the consequent state-building project can achieve. Of all international organizations present on the ground, only UN political missions, based on its peace-building mandate, are authorized to become involved in national political matters (UN 2009). Even the World Bank, with its extensive expertise and presence in post-conflict development, given its mandate and terms of reference, is limited in its operations to matters of poverty reduction and economic development. In fulfilling such a powerful political and development mandate, the UN Secretary-General and Security Council are assisted by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Departments of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), and Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) (DPKO 2008).

As for other UN specialized agencies, many of them have established their own set of partners and operation mechanisms. Various parts of the UN are very rightly linked to distinct areas of specialization and relevant international legal instruments (UN Conventions), each with its own pace and accountability. The unity of actions on the ground is clearly undermined by such diversity in approaches and external partners.

The effort to ‘deliver as one’³⁶ a system-wide coherence initiative, while an important overarching instrument, did not seem to be sufficient for particular peace-building operations on the ground to produce a more rapid and effective response in the immediate aftermath of conflict.

Despite a strong political mandate, within the UN system, the peace-building efforts up until recently had no institutional base. As opposed to humanitarian (UN OCHA) and peacekeeping (UN DPKO) efforts, peace-building ‘found temporary and tenuous shelter under the roof of development agencies’ (Tschirgi 2004).

A new mechanism to ensure greater coherence and give a ‘home’ to peace-building is the UN Peace-building Commission. Established in 2005, the Commission was designed with the recognition of the need for a dedicated UN mechanism to sustain attention, mobilize resources and improve coherence while addressing critical gaps, needs and priorities in countries emerging from conflict. The attempt to promote an inclusive and integrated approach to peace-building made the membership and working modalities of the Commission unique, if somehow convoluted.³⁷ Perhaps the strongest innovation introduced with the work of the Commission is that its activity would be supported by a special Peace-Building Fund, which would allow prompt funding of early peace-building priorities and bridge the delays in donor disbursements for longer

³⁶ Report of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment EMBA, (UN 2006).

³⁷ For a detailed membership and operational arrangements of the Commission please see: <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/structuremember.shtml>

term development priorities.³⁸ As of December 2011, the Commission supported peace-building efforts in Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic, arguably with mixed results in coordination and resource mobilization. As an entity established relatively recently, one may argue that the Commission will require more time to develop and function effectively. However, the countries the Commission was created to serve need urgent help in order not to return to conflict, and if the Commission will fail to improve its performance in delivering necessary resources and in designing more concrete commitments and recommendations for both the national government and the international players, its reputation will be undermined, further hampering the implementation of Commissions critical functions of coordination, monitoring, and best-practice promotion in fragile post-conflict states (Ponzio 2011, p.90-94).

Peace-building status quo and future action

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed how the specific geo-political context of early post-conflict situations, together with the intrinsic domestic circumstances, make every post-conflict situation unique, with unique challenges encountered by those who lead the intervention and state-building program. Overall, and since the implementation

³⁸ In the immediate aftermath of conflict, a first quick release of funds could be requested by the senior UN official in the country, working closely with national authorities, to catalyze concrete activities identified in an early integrated strategic framework, or its equivalent. A second more significant allotment could be made available once a national peace consolidation and recovery framework has been established, to catalyze the urgent activities identified therein and help to bridge delays in donor disbursements.

of the Marshall Plan in the post-World War II period, development theory and practice, particularly with respect to the role of aid, have undergone major changes.³⁹

While the international community has accumulated a broad range of experience, and has learned many lessons from its engagement in dozens of countries emerging from conflict, there seems to be consensus that lessons have not yet been fully learned and strategies to achieve success in state-building in general, and in its reconstruction and development domain in particular, have not yet been fully developed. Back in 2004, in her review of the achievements and limitations in post-conflict peace-building, Tschirgi (2004), an experienced aid specialist and astute analyst of post-conflict interventions, posed a question: ‘Why is that after more than ten years of practice, the international peace-building project is still experimental, amorphous and tenuous in nature? And how can the knowledge and experience gained to date be better put to use to achieve more effective peace-building outcomes?’ Like-minded authors argued that, compared to peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, the practice of UN peace-building ‘has not yet developed the depth of experience, specialization and mission clarity that exists in the first two areas’ (IPA 2004).

Today, both these questions remain valid. The search for an optimal and more successful way of engagement in post-conflict situation continues on two major levels. The first deals with the policies, strategies, and approaches employed by external actors.

³⁹ In basic terms, the Plan was designed to stimulate the reconstruction of post-war Europe with the view of eventually creating a large market for US goods, thus maintaining global economic well-being. The Plan tied part of the aid to goods and services provided by the United States, as well as giving a certain portion of the aid in the form of loans rather than grants, which is usually not the case with current reconstruction and development aid.

Authors debate whether certain policies were appropriate in addressing the specifics of post-conflict situations. Process being often as important as substance, the second focuses on the actual implementation of international policies and strategies on the ground. At this level of debate, authors assess the fundamental, yet by now well known, challenges as they arise from this practical level of aid program implementation and discuss possible ways of overcoming them. Despite the specific, often unique combination of circumstances of international intervention, common challenges ranging from the inherent limitations of liberal internationalism to difficult conditions on the ground, unfamiliar cultural context, lack of national ownership, proliferation and weak coordination among donors come forth from the review of the past experience. Issues related to legitimacy, accountability, funding, competencies and expertise of different organizations involved are all mentioned as well.

These challenges, in some form or another, will be the subject of the discussion that continues in the following chapters. In particular, the discussion will draw on the experience of international intervention in Afghanistan, which presents a vivid illustration of the challenges encountered in the process of state-building efforts, and of the lessons derived from this process.

2.2 International Intervention and Aid in Afghanistan

Following the above review and analysis of the international intervention and aid experience since the end of the Cold War, this section considers in detail the international engagement and peace-building efforts in Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban in 2001. I review the historic, political, institutional, social and cultural circumstances and conditions under which aid programmes were designed and undertaken in Afghanistan, in an attempt to provide a historically grounded overview of the constraints on the national government *and* on the international donors working with the national government.

Before a communist coup and Soviet invasion in 1978, Afghanistan was already one of the poorest countries in the world. Since the communist coup, and over the last twenty years the country has been under conditions of continuous conflict, with a Soviet invasion and following ten years of occupation, a civil war after the Soviet withdrawal, and a regional proxy war for dominance between India and Pakistan. With an estimate 1.5 million people killed, the cost of destroyed infrastructure and the opportunity cost of lost production during this period had been estimated by the World Bank at \$290 billion (Ghani and Lockhart 2008).

The history of political instability and turmoil left the country with few capable institutions to undergird the aid effort. Dire economic and social conditions as a result of protracted conflict, people's dependence on illicit opium production, with the political elite linked to drugs, rampant corruption, all created conditions less than favorable to

effective and speedy international aid and reconstruction efforts, influencing directly or otherwise, the process of implementation of aid projects on the ground.

Historic and social background

Afghanistan is a landlocked country with a population estimated at 29.8 million. Afghans consists of a number of ethnic groups, with Pashtuns, Tadjiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks being the largest⁴⁰ (CIA 2011). The majority of Afghans are Sunni Muslims, while an estimated 20 per cent are Shia. The Afghan population is overwhelmingly rural: 74 percent (around 18.5 million people) live in rural areas and only 20 percent (5.0 million) in urban areas, and six percent (1.5 million) are Kuchi nomads (EU 2008). Traditionally Afghan society is male-dominated, with traditional, cultural and religious limitations on women's participation in public life and employment (see for instance Ewans 2002). Afghanistan is divided by the Hindu Kush mountain range, and is prone to earthquakes and droughts (Figure 2.2).

⁴⁰ The World Bank estimate of the population in 2010 was 34,385,068. The numbers are estimate as the most recent Afghan census was conducted in 1979, and the census planned for 2008 was cancelled by the government for fear that the results might be destabilizing. Carrying out voter registration for 2009 presidential elections and a population census in the same year risked politicizing the census in terms of revealing changed ratio of ethnic composition and would jeopardize statistical integrity (UNFPA 2009).

Figure 2.2 - Map of Afghanistan



Source: CIA World Factbook 2011

Founded in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani after the unification of the Pashtun tribes, Afghanistan has experienced a revolution, political cups, military invasions, and civil war. Until it won independence from notional British control in 1919, the country served as a buffer between the British and Russian Empires, a trend that continued later during the Cold War power struggle between the Soviet Union and the West (Hopkirk 1992, Ewans 2002).

In a 1973 coup, King Zahir Shah ⁴¹ was overthrown and a republic was established under returning President Daoud. Another Communist coup, in 1978, brought to power a pro-Soviet President Taraki, who along with Hafizullah Amin and Babrak Karmal, the following two presidents, initiated the Saur Revolution, a communist coup, to establish the communist Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The Soviet Union invaded in 1979 to support the weak Afghan communist regime, sparking resistance and a long civil conflict that would continue in some form or another for over 30 years.

In 1985, the Mujahideen movement ⁴² came together in Pakistan to form an alliance against the Soviet forces. The movement was well backed up by the West financially and militarily. Nine years later, with little success in the Afghan war and under a deteriorating domestic political situation, the Soviet Union signed a peace agreement (the so-called Geneva Accords) with Afghanistan, the US and Pakistan, and pulled out its troops (Rubin 2003, p.45-68).

Without Soviet military backing, in 1992 the pro-Soviet government led by the then-president Najibullah, was toppled. In the devastating civil war that followed, the Taliban seized control of Kabul in 1996, and by 1997 was controlling two-thirds of the country.

⁴¹ The last King of Afghanistan, who reigned for four decades, from 1933 and until he was overthrown by a communist coup in 1973. After the fall of the Taliban he returned to Afghanistan from his 28-year exile in Italy, and was given the title 'Father of the Nation' in 2002 which he held until his death in 2007.

⁴² Comprising various Afghan opposition groups, the movement rebelled against the pro-Soviet Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) government during the late 1970s and fought against Soviet and DRA troops during the Soviet war in Afghanistan. After the Soviet Union pulled out of the conflict in the late 1980s, the Mujahideen fought each other in the subsequent Afghan Civil War.

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US initiated a string of events that brought Afghanistan to the centre of international public and media attention, with intertwining politics of military, humanitarian and development collaboration. Based on its Article V on mutual defense,⁴³ the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) laid the legal ground for a US-led attack on Al-Qaeda and Taliban bases in Afghanistan. Performed in collaboration with the Afghan Northern Alliance, and called ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’, the military campaign began the US’s ‘War on Terror’, toppling the Taliban in October 2001, and supporting the Northern Alliance in taking over Kabul shortly afterwards. (For the full list of key events in the history of Afghanistan please see Annex 9).

Humanitarian situation and early UN engagement in Afghanistan

Prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979 it was estimated that 80 per cent of Afghanistan population’s living was derived from agriculture, services and crafts. The scarcity of irrigation and drinking water substantially limits the availability of arable and fertile land (WB 2010). Trying to escape from harsh living conditions and the threat of ongoing conflict, the number of civilians fleeing the country increased steadily, making Afghanistan the world's worst refugee crisis. The consequences of extended conflict manifested itself in distrust of the Afghan people in their state, the militarization of the society, weak civil society structures and a fragmented social fabric.

⁴³ Referred as to the ‘article of faith’, under Article 5 (NATO 1949), ‘The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all’. The attacks on Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan based on Article V represent the only time this article has been invoked.

The active conflict also caused irreparable destruction of the little infrastructure that existed, hampered any further development, and forced large amounts of Afghans to become refugees and internally displaced people.

By 1990, there were 6.3 million refugees, with 3.3 million in Pakistan and three million in Iran. The UNHCR established more than 300 villages in Pakistan for the mainly ethnic Pashtun refugees. In Iran, the mostly ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras lived and found work in local communities. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that the area under agricultural cultivation in Afghanistan fell by 40 per cent between 1979 and 1991 (UNHCR 2009, FAO 2008).

The UN has had an active presence in Afghanistan since 1988,⁴⁴ and played an important role in ending the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan by mediating the Agreements on the Settlement of the Situation Relating to Afghanistan under United Nations auspices, signed in April 1988 (UNNC 2009). The Soviet withdrawal was completed in February 1989 and the UN had begun strenuous efforts to coordinate humanitarian assistance. Afghanistan had long been designated by the UN as one of the world's least developed countries and war only made it more difficult to respond to the challenge of reconstruction and development (UNNC 2009).

In addition to the UN, during the 1980s, international NGOs and charities provided substantial support for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and by mid-1980s many of these NGOs had also begun cross-border operations in Afghanistan from

⁴⁴ Afghanistan joined the UN in 1946.

Pakistan. They provided medical assistance, basic education, water and sanitation services and various forms of agricultural and farming assistance. In the course of the 1990s, many of the Afghan refugees attempted to return, some successfully, some having to seek refuge again. Following the fall of Taliban in 2001, more than 5.7 million refugees, 4.6 million of them with UNHCR assistance, have returned to Afghanistan since 2002, increasing the population of the country by some 25 per cent (UNHCR 2010).

The provision of aid was a dangerous undertaking since the 1990s, particularly with the arrival of the Taliban to power. A limited number of international and Afghan NGOs continued to provide services. Donors were operating from Pakistan, and in 1998 developed a set of guidelines attempting to prevent the humanitarian interventions and the aid from strengthening the Taliban regime. The provision of development assistance was prohibited, while humanitarian assistance and minor reconstruction efforts were undertaken through NGOs. As a consequence, the definition of humanitarian aid was stretched beyond conventional alleviation of human suffering, to include assistance in health, education and many other spheres of life, with many humanitarian institutions undertaking reconstruction and development work (UNDP 2003, Donini et al. eds. 2004).

Upon the fall of Taliban in October 2001, the model for the new Afghanistan was agreed by the international community and the Northern Alliance at the promptly organized Bonn Conference in December 2001. The Bonn Agreement served the basis

for the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration, while the financial pledges made at the Tokyo in January 2002 opened the way for a wide-scale state-building effort in Afghanistan.

While the Bonn Agreement placed responsibility for the peace-building process on the Afghans, the need for international assistance of this process led to the UN Security Council adopting Resolution 1401 (March 2002), endorsing the establishment, for an initial period of 12 months,⁴⁵ of a United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), with the political and development mandate and structure⁴⁶ laid out in the report of the Secretary-General of 18 March 2002 (S/2002/278).⁴⁷ The ISAF was to provide security in the course of the peace-building process⁴⁸. (A detailed list of political and development events following the fall of the Taliban is in Figure 2.3).

⁴⁵ With possible annual extension of the mandate as endorsed by the Security Council (for instance, Resolution 1806 (UNSC 2008) —Adopted by the Security Council at its 5857th meeting, on 20 March 2008 which Decides to extend the mandate of UNAMA, as defined in its resolutions 1662 (2006) and 1746 (2007), until 23 March 2009)

⁴⁶ Two major pillars of operation – political and development – underlay UNAMA's organizational structure (see Annex 8 for a complete organizational chart).

⁴⁷ Report of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council on the Situation in Afghanistan, the Proposal of UNAMA and Key Developments since the Signing of the Bonn Agreement, 18 March 2002, A/56/875–S/2002/278. Excerpt: *Should the Security Council authorize its establishment, the core of the mission's mandate would entail: (a) Fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities, including those related to human rights, the rule of law and gender issues, entrusted to the United Nations in the Bonn Agreement, which were endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1383 (2001); (b) Promoting national reconciliation and rapprochement throughout the country, through the good offices role of my Special Representative; (c) Managing all United Nations humanitarian relief, recovery and reconstruction activities in Afghanistan, under the overall authority of my Special Representative and in coordination with the Interim Authority and successor administrations of Afghanistan. The overall objective of UNAMA should be to provide support for the implementation of the Bonn Agreement processes, including the stabilization of the emerging structures of the Afghan Interim Authority, while recognizing that the responsibility for the Agreement's implementation ultimately rests with the Afghans themselves.*

⁴⁸ The United States has refused to participate in that force on the grounds that US military's task was to fight the Taliban and al Qaeda, i.e leading the offensive and not to be part of ISAF 'stabilization operations' and help take on warlords which President Karzai believed was the main threat to his government (from an interview with Barnett Rubin, a leading specialist on Afghanistan. Council on Foreign Relations, 14 July 2004.

Figure 2.3

2001 Bonn Agreement Establishes an Interim Authority for six months, to be replaced by a Transitional Authority tasked with drafting a constitution and holding elections within two years; Sets out the roles of a UN-mandated force in securing Kabul, with possible later expansion, and in training new Afghan security forces UN Security Council endorses the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide security
2002 Tokyo Donor Conference Pledges US\$4.5 billion in financial aid over five years UN Security Council endorses the establishment of a United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Emergency <i>Loya Jirga</i> (traditional Grand Assembly) elected Hamid Karzai as President
2004 UNDP Afghanistan returns from duty station in Pakistan (Islamabad) New Constitution adopted Berlin Donor Conference A multi-year commitment of US\$8.2 billion is made for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan for the fiscal years 1383-1385 (March 2004-March 2007), which includes a pledge of US\$4.4 billion for 1383 (March 2004-March 2005) First Presidential elections in Afghan history held Hamid Karzai is elected President
2005 Parliamentary and Provincial Council elections held Bicameral Parliament formed
2006

Afghanistan Compact, successor to the Bonn Agreement, defines principles of cooperation for 2006–11

Agreed pillars of activity: security; governance, rule of law and human rights; economic and social development.

Performance benchmarks and timelines agreed (many by end of 2010)

Commitments made to improve aid effectiveness

2008

Paris Conference

Paris Declaration adopts the Afghanistan National Development Strategy

Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)

ANDS establishes the strategy, policies, programmes and projects of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to be implemented from 2008 to 2012 to achieve the GIROA's development objectives.

These are organized under three pillars: (i) security; (ii) governance, rule of law and human rights; and (iii) economic and social development;

Donors are encouraged to implement their projects through the national budget or at the least to ensure that their projects are aligned with ANDS objectives and priorities

2009

Hague Conference

Stresses the need for greater Afghan ownership of security and economic development

2010**London Conference**

A phased transition to an Afghan lead on security operations to begin late 2010/early 2011;

Targets for significant increases in Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) personnel announced: 171,000 recruits to the ANA and 134,000 to the ANP by the end of 2011;

Significant increases in international forces (to around 135,000) announced with an accompanying ‘civilian surge’;

Commitments made to better-coordinated development assistance, increasingly channeled through the GIRoA;

In turn, the GIRoA committed to anti-corruption measures

Kabul Conference

Resolves that Afghan forces to lead security operations by 2014;

At least 50% of aid to be channeled through the Government of Afghanistan

Source: author, based on UN SC 2002, UNAMA/ISAF 2006, UNDP 2009a, Poole 2011

A large influx of international assistance and aid providers into Kabul and other major Afghan cities began in late 2001. While the UN had committed itself to a ‘light footprint’ (Brahimi 2000),⁴⁹ this did not apply to the various local and international NGOs, the number of which grew exponentially, by some accounts reaching over 2000 by early 2004, rendering coordination virtually impossible (Waisová 2008, p.81, Olson 2005, cited in Waisová 2008).

⁴⁹ ‘In very simple terms, the principle of a “light footprint” advocated in Brahimi Report, is to avoid overly-large international missions duplicating local skills without the benefit of local knowledge, which leads to parallel aid delivery mechanisms that actually undermine national institutional development’. A golden principle for international assistance should be that everyone shall do everything possible to work himself or herself out of a job as early as possible. (Brahimi 2007).

New constitutional setup

One of the main tasks of the international peace-building agenda was to establish a functional government in Afghanistan, a government that would be a potent counterpart in designing and implementing further reconstruction and development efforts. The Afghan Interim Authority was transformed into the Afghan Transition Authority (ATA), at an emergency session of the *Loya Jirga*, Afghan Grand Council, in June 2002, and with Hamid Karzai elected as the Chairman of the ATA. A cabinet of 25 specialized ministries (Figure 2.4), became the main focal point for its international counterparts to undergird the ongoing reconstruction and development efforts. A Constitutional *Loya Jirga* was convened in December 2003, and on 4 January 2004 approved the new Constitution, one of the most progressive ones in the Muslim world (Dobbins 2008, p.161). Afghanistan and its government gained international recognition, following which the embassies, UN agencies, NGOs and international organizations returned or opened new offices in Kabul.

Figure 2.4 – Afghan Government Ministries

1	Foreign Affairs	15	Women Affairs
2	Defense	16	Returnees and Refugees
3	Interior	17	Islamic Affairs
4	Economy	18	Border and Tribal Affairs
5	Finance	19	Counter Narcotics
6	Public Health	20	Higher Education
7	Information and Culture	21	Public Works
8	Energy and Water	22	Rural Rehabilitation and Development
9	Mines	23	Labour and Social Affairs
10	Education	24	Transport
11	Justice		
12	Communications and Information Technology		
13	Commerce and Industries		
14	Agriculture		
		25	Urban Development

Source: The Embassy of Afghanistan, Washington DC 2009⁵⁰

The introduction of such new order did not change, however, the Afghans' allegiance to their culture, traditions and religious beliefs, as well as their reliance on ethnic, tribal and family networks and safety nets developed and relied upon through the times of conflict, insecurity and deprivation (see for instance Forsberg 2010, Kakar 2007). This created challenges in the expansion of government institutions, particularly at the sub-

⁵⁰ <http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/ministers.html>

national level, and in the promotion of professional integrity good governance principles in the civil service.

The effort to co-opt former field commanders into the newly created political system with the aim of consolidating the peace has had its negative sides, including for the implementation of aid programmes involving the ministries led by former military leaders. The central government secured a degree of control from the warlords and unelected leaders in the provinces by promising to allow them to participate in the new Afghan government, under a condition that they would give up their arms and disband their militias. As a result, some warlords, tribal, ethnic and religious leaders either managed to enter the cabinet in key positions of power or stood for election to the National Assembly. Such political appointments of former warlords were viewed by the population as granting immunity to notorious war criminals, negatively reflecting on the image of the newly established government. Such appointments put the international donors in difficult positions of having to decide whether to engage and fund with the ministers and ministries in question, having to justify such collaboration with their governments and constituencies. Moreover, such former warlord appointees did not have any experience of being part of a technocrat government and running an office, making them a far from ideal national counterpart to collaborate with in the implementation of aid programmes.

Ethnic background and tensions

The complex ethnic context in Afghanistan, with its diverse ethnicities and deeply rooted divisions exacerbated by competition for resources and power, is believed to be one of the main causes of protracted conflict in Afghanistan. Nowadays these divisions and competition are just as acute, making it difficult for the international donors and organizations to navigate the national political and ethnic landscape in order to design and deliver impartial and independent aid interventions on the ground.

The major ethnicities of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, each supported by its own Islamic militant movement, creating ongoing tensions and sporadic conflicts⁵¹, Rubin (1995) draws an insightful and detailed picture of the role the rivalries between ethnicities and political elites, and the Islamic opposition to Soviet rule with its armed resistance played in collapse of the Afghan state into a war.

Since the majority of Taliban members are Pashtun, the militant movement is regarded by other ethnic groups and militant factions as Pashtun, despite Taliban initial efforts to steer clear of association with any ethnicity and to rely on purely strict religious imperatives (Misdaq 2006). The Taliban-led insurgency is currently the most active and destabilizing in Afghanistan. Financial support to the movement comes from the illicit opium poppy cultivation revenue, but many argue that in addition to this source, the Taliban has a powerful financial and technical backing from Pakistani and Saudi Arabian sources (see for instance Rashid 1999).

⁵¹ Pashtun – *Hezbi Islami*, Taliban; Tajiks – *Jamiat Islami*; Uzbeks – *Junbishi Milli*; Hazaras – *Hezbi Wahdat* (see for instance Afghanistan: political frailty and external interference by Nabi Misdaq 2006).

Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, and are regarded as the main competitors and rivals of the Pashtuns. Tajiks speak Dari/Farsi, and are predominantly located in the northern provinces of Afghanistan. The so-called Northern Alliance,⁵² led by a Tajik field commander Ahmadshah Masood, formed the main opposition to the Taliban during its rule in late 1990s. The dynamics of long-standing competition and rivalry between the two ethnic groups were on display during the most recent presidential elections in 2009, when incumbent President Karzai, who is Pashtu, was most strongly challenged by a Tajik former foreign minister, Abdullah Abdullah.⁵³ The experience of this elections, and the consequences of the alleged involvement of high-ranking UN officials in election outcomes (with related scandals and resignations) is perhaps the best example of the difficulties and risks international players face dealing with murky waters of the Afghan ethnic division.

⁵² By some accounts, created by Iranian forces following the fall of the Soviet power in Afghanistan (Misdaq 2006).

⁵³ Abdullah was foreign minister of the Northern Alliance from 1998 onwards, and was a dominant figure in the Alliance. After the US invasion, Abdullah was appointed foreign minister in the interim government that was installed. During the elections, international media and observers reported widely on both sides engaging in intimidation and bribing of voters in support for their candidate, with Karzai ethnic stronghold in the south of the country, and Abdullah's followers in the north. The Independent Elections Commission, the Afghan body in charge of organizing and conducting the elections, had reportedly come under 'a lot of pressure' from the Karzai administration to open more polling stations in the southern provinces of Paktika, Paktia, Khost, Zabul, Helmand and Kandahar where the government has little control beyond major urban centers. Registration figures suggested that concerted preparations for vote-rigging had taken place in Khost and Paktia. In the days following the elections, Abdullah Abdullah, denounced the chairman of the IEC as working for Karzai. Foreign observers have also criticised the Independent Election Commission as being full of Karzai appointees, and an election run-off was decided. However On 1 November 2009, Abdullah Abdullah announced that he was withdrawing from the run-off vote in the November 7 election, 'because his demands for changes in the electoral commission had not been met', and a 'transparent election is not possible.' Hamid Karzai had rejected Abdullah's demand that the head of the IEC resign. The next day, on November 2, officials from the Independent Election Commission announced the cancellation of the November 7 run-off and declared Hamid Karzai the winner by default (Cooper and Zeleny 2009, Farmer 2009). UN SRSG and head of UNAMA Kai Eide was accused by his Deputy Peter Galbraith of covering up election fraud that helped President Hamid Karzai. Mr. Eide vehemently denied the allegations and said he had followed Afghan law. Mr. Galbraith was dismissed in autumn 2009 shortly after the incident, SRSG Eide stepped down at the end of his contract in early 2010.

Illicit opium economy

The economic importance of opium production for Afghanistan, as well as its negative impact on the state-building efforts in the country, are widely acknowledged curtailing the efforts of sub-national institution-building (Rubin 2006, UNODC 2008a, Rashid 2009⁵⁴).

The dire consequences of illicit opium and heroin trafficking on consumer nations are also uncontested. There is no agreement, however, among the international players in Afghanistan on how to address the problem. Some international actors supported the idea of opium poppy eradication, including by aerial spraying, which was vehemently opposed by others on the grounds of collateral damage and possible health repercussions among the population. Others argued the best way out of the situation was to give farmers alternatives to cultivating opium, and support these alternatives with start-up grants and micro-credit. The implementation of such alternatives, however, is closely linked with the overall rural development agenda and the security situation in the provinces.

Several reasons are believed to explain the beginning of wide-scale opium cultivation in Afghanistan. Analysts argue that it was a combination of growing demand for opiates in the world following the suppression of production in the traditional opium supplier countries of the golden triangle,⁵⁵ and the lack of agricultural infrastructure as a

⁵⁴ Ahmed Rashid on Charlie Rose, aired on 17 April 2009, <http://www.charlierose.com/search/?text=rashid>, accessed 15 February 2010.

⁵⁵ Burma, Laos and Vietnam.

result of extended civil war in Afghanistan, exacerbated by the scarcity of irrigation water⁵⁶ (PBS 2011⁵⁷, Felbab-Brown 2011).

In 2006, poppy cultivation jumped by 61 percent and Afghanistan produced 90 percent of the world's opium (UNODC 2007). Narcotics production and counternarcotics policies in Afghanistan are of critical importance not only for drug control there and worldwide, but also for the security, reconstruction and rule of law efforts in Afghanistan. But in a vicious circle, without security and rule of law, a reduction in poppy cultivation is hard to achieve (Peters 2006, Mansfield and Pain 2007, Rubin and Sherman 2008), representing a major dilemma and a hindrance to aid efforts in the country.

Corruption

In addition to political, developmental and security implications, the opium economy is a source of corruption and, together with other sources of corruption, nepotism, and organized crime undercuts Afghan public institutions, particularly those in the security and justice sectors. The 2007 Human Development Report on Afghanistan reported on 'pervasive corruption in Afghanistan', with the courts perceived as the most corrupt institution, followed by the administrative branches of the Government. In a survey conducted by the Integrity Watch Afghanistan in the same year, 60 per cent of Afghans surveyed said the current level of corruption within the government was worse than at

⁵⁶ Opium poppy, as compared to other agricultural products, does not require as much water and care (UNODC 2007)

⁵⁷ PBS Frontline documentary 'Opium Brides', aired January 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/opium-brides/>, accessed 20 February 2012.

any time in the past 30 years or so, including under Taliban and Soviet rule. Ninety-three per cent of the surveyed believed more than half public services required a bribe (IWA 2007).

Public positions and services are seen by many as being for sale, not only undercutting public administration and good governance efforts by the donors, but also negatively affecting the quality and continuity of the national government counterparts in the day-to-day implementation of aid programmes and projects. moreover, and in addition to direct misuse and loss of financial resources and public assets, corruption has the potential to skew government policies and decisions, affect performance and results of civil servants, as well as hamper private sector development through the necessity of bribes (WB 2008e).

Perhaps the most important implication of the rising levels of corruption in Afghanistan is the loss of government credibility and legitimacy. Similarly, the perception of widespread corruption makes donors and people in donor countries reluctant to provide further aid, either through government budget or through directly executed projects (UNODC 2007b). In combination, the circumstances including ongoing insecurity, a weak capacity of the newly established national government institutions, further undermined by ethnic rivalry, as well as the problem of illicit drugs and corruption, presented the international donors with a unique set of challenges on the way to successful implementation of aid programmes in Afghanistan.

Post Taliban reconstruction and development efforts

The US government's decision to invade Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 al-Qaida⁵⁸ terrorist attacks on the US was supported by some political scientists and Afghanistan experts as crucial to US interests (for instance Nye 2002, Rubin 2004, Keohane 2011⁵⁹) and was opposed by others who dismissed the 'safe heaven' argument as futile (for instance Walt 2009).

The intervention, and transition to peace and stabilization under circumstances such as in Afghanistan, meant changing the entire political economy of the country. Even in the notoriously difficult arena of post-conflict state-building, Afghanistan presented an 'extreme' case. The attempt to create a Western-style democratic state with a functioning centralized government in a country with a long-standing history of sporadic military rule, weak tradition of centralized government, and with the cultural context not particularly well-understood on the west was a daring project (Leader and Atmar 2004, Innocent and Preble 2009). The complex interaction between politics, security, the economy and the rule of law was obvious, with each of these forces having the potential to undermine aid and recovery (Rotberg et al 2007).

Given the necessity to address these areas in concert, and despite opinions that violence must cease before civil aid can be given, and that 'hard power should come before soft power' in Afghanistan (Nye 2004, 2009), the so-called 'three D' strategy of

⁵⁸ Militant Islamist terrorist organization founded by Osama bin Laden in 1989, operates as a network pursuing global Islamic war (Jihad). The organization was qualified as a terrorist organization by the United States, the United Nations Security Council, the European Union, NATO, and many countries around the world.

⁵⁹ Robert Keohane lecture at Cornell University discussing criteria for military intervention in weak countries, 13 October 2011, Cornell Chronicle Online. Online, available at: <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Oct11/KeohaneCover.html>, accessed 17 February 2012.

defence, diplomacy, development⁶⁰ was pursued not in sequence as intended, but all at once. Assistance was required to address immediate humanitarian needs, while at the same time undertaking efforts of security and political stabilization, and longer-term post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Major financial resources were channeled into the country by donors for reconstruction and development, security and military purposes; by 2009, these resources totalled around US\$286.4 billion. Between 2002 and 2009, US\$26.7 billion in aid was spent in Afghanistan, making the country the leading global recipient of official development assistance (ODA) for the second consecutive year. Foreign military operations in the country have cost the international community in excess of US\$242.9 billion. While volumes of funding for the security sector and counternarcotics activities are difficult to trace, it is estimated that between 2002 and 2009 at least US\$16.1 billion was spent in these two areas (OECD/DAC 2009, UNDP 2009a, Poole 2011).

The introduction of a state-building programme in Afghanistan by the international community was undertaken under conditions where much of the Southern and South-Eastern part of the country was still in conditions of what many would call open conflict, with escalation of Taliban insurgency to the levels which made some analysts believe that the country as a whole was sliding back into conflict (UN SC 2007). As a result, despite global recognition of the need to pursue security and development objectives in an integrated and balanced manner, in Afghanistan military

⁶⁰ Hillary Clinton nomination hearing before the US Senate to become Secretary of State, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Washington, DC., January 13, 2009. Online, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/01/115196.htm>, accessed 25 February 2012.

assistance has outweighed development assistance by a ratio of ten to one (UNDP 2009a). The time pressure under which aid activities in all sectors were subsequently subjected to reflected both the urgent needs that existed in Afghanistan, as well as the pressure on donors to demonstrate results both in the field and back home.

In designing policy and programmes for a largely unfamiliar ethnic and cultural context, donors in only a few cases possessed the knowledge and expertise that they needed; they mainly relied on the experience of international organizations and NGOs who had worked previously in Afghanistan, in sectors where each particular donor believed that it had a comparative advantage⁶¹.

In addition to the unfamiliar cultural context, in the implementation of their programmes, donors and aid agencies in Afghanistan had to deal with the country's dire economic and social circumstances. In the 2004 Human Development Index, Afghanistan ranked 173 out of 178 countries. According to the OECD (2007), Afghanistan's deep structural poverty, weak state institutions – the result of 30 years of war – growing insurgency, insufficient economic and employment opportunities, and a thriving illicit economy,⁶² meant that the country qualified in almost every way as a “fragile state”⁶³. In a vicious circle, these same factors also fuelled the recurrent instability and military insurgency.

⁶¹ Thus, for instance, the US was leading the military, police and security forces training and equipment, Italy was actively involved in the Justice and Penitentiary reform, the UK in counternarcotics, Germany in agriculture and farming, the EU in public and administrative institution building, and Japan in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) (DFID 2009, Rubin and Sherman 2008).

⁶² This reached about 50 percent of the GDP at its peak (2006), according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Opium Poppy Survey 2008.

⁶³ The World Bank defines a set of fragile situations. A fragile situation is defined as having either: a) a composite World Bank, African Development Bank and Asian Development Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment rating of 3.2

Figure 2.5

Box 1. Summary of factors fuelling violent conflict in Afghanistan
■ Weak state institutions challenged by severe human, financial and institutional resource constraints, and widespread corruption undermining the credibility of state institutions. ■ Militias and criminal networks led by warlords that serve as substitute forms of governance, undermine security and prevent development. ■ Outside influences, interests, and safe havens (particularly in Pakistan and Iran) for anti-government elements in Afghanistan, and the use of Afghan territory as a base for those fighting wars in neighbouring countries (such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kashmir). ■ Availability of small arms, with ready use of arms as a means of conflict resolution and related societal insecurity. ■ Domination of illicit economic ventures including the drug trade to fund everything from militias to local services and social support networks. ■ Absence of viable job opportunities, exacerbated by an economic environment that is not conducive to the creation and promotion of sustainable livelihoods. ■ Scarcity and illegal or contested allocation or ownership of, or access to, resources. These are often particular to land and water and compounded by natural disasters or broken down traditional, statutory or community controls, often supplanted by influence of local warlords or power brokers. ■ Exclusion along ethnic lines that manifests in imbalances in access to education, ownership of resources, access to power, and expression of culture. ■ Regional and international interests that support their proxy groups inside Afghanistan, some ideologically aligned to the Taliban. This is despite the signing of the 'Good Neighbourly Relations Agreement' of December 2002.

Source: UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme Evaluation, 2009a

Under such difficult security conditions, government officials, international and Afghan aid workers were increasingly subject to attacks and abductions. The insurgents increasingly used 'Iraq-style' tactics, such as roadside bombs, suicide attacks and kidnappings against foreign and Afghan targets around the country. In 2007, more than 40 convoys delivering food aid for the World Food Programme were attacked and looted. In more than 130 attacks against aid workers, 40 aid workers were killed and 89 abducted, seven of whom were later killed by their captors.⁶⁴

or less; or b) the presence of a United Nations and/or regional peace-keeping or peace-building mission (e.g. African Union, European Union, NATO), with the exclusion of border monitoring operations, during the past three years (WB Fragile and Conflict-affected Countries 2011).

⁶⁴ Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, report on Afghanistan to the Security Council (UNSC 2007).

Similarly, in the construction of the Afghanistan Ring Road,⁶⁵ a flagship reconstruction project with a budget of USD2.5 billion financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and US Agency for International Development (USAID) for the paving of approximately 3,000 kilometers of roads connecting Kabul, Herat and Kandahar (Figure 2.6), between 2003 and early 2008, 162 contractors lost their lives building the southern half of the highway's ring (USGAO 2008, Wonacott 2009). The ADB says it has confronted repeated security-related delays and cost overruns⁶⁶.

Figure 2.6 – Afghanistan Ring Road completion map, as of August 2009



⁶⁵ A circle highway system in a poor and landlocked country could help farmers, factories and the country's resource-rich mines get goods to market. It could ultimately position Afghanistan as a bridge between its Central Asian neighbors and the big markets of Iran, India and China. As a good example, the ring road's economic benefits are obvious in Maimana, the capital of Faryab. With a new portion of the road from the east connecting the town with the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, goods have poured in from abroad: shampoo from Iran, soap from Ukraine, rice from India and counterfeit British perfumes made in China. Fruit prices have fallen by a half from a year ago, say merchants, mainly due to a drop in transport costs. Mullah Mohammed Latif, a Maimana vegetable salesman, says he used to take at least four days to make the round trip by truck to Mazar-e-Sharif. En route, he says, he would lose large amounts of his melons and grapes to the sun and thieves. Now he hires a taxi to do the trip in a day (Wonacott 2009).

⁶⁶ ADB Completion Report 'Afghanistan: Andkhoy-Qaisar Road Project', ADB 2010.

Given such a combination of challenges at hand, many argue that international actors in Afghanistan underplayed basic development constraints and took an overly optimistic view of the possible pace of change. Objectives set and programmes designed and introduced were too ambitious, very complex, resulting in the implementation of sub-standard aid. A more accurate reading of the context would have helped international actors take a more realistic view of the difficulty and long-term nature of state-building and to avoid costly mistakes (OECD/DAC 2008, UNDP 2009a, Rotberg ed. 2007, Fishstein et al. 2011).

Operational challenges of aid programme implementation

While most donors involved in Afghanistan shared values and vision, supported the principle of putting Afghans in ‘the driving seat’, and had similar humanitarian and military objectives, they have not acted jointly. Poor coordination among various aid actors in Afghanistan, which is partially responsible for the overall low effectiveness of the aid, is perhaps the most common criticism made of the donor community and its performance in Afghanistan. Each donor had its distinct political and development objectives to pursue (CIDA 2004, USAID 2009, DFID 2009). The large number and diversity of national and international actors active in Afghanistan both at the strategic and operational level, and the corresponding plethora of coordination and consultation mechanisms and platforms, made and continue to make Afghanistan one of the most

challenging contexts to understand and navigate while implementing aid initiatives (see for instance DANIDA 2005, Margesson 2010).

As is often claimed, assistance was mostly short-term, with a high turnover of both aid workers and military personnel, which did not allow for a coherent and substantial transfer of skills to local counterparts (Michailof 2007).

Additional challenges at the operational level in Afghanistan stemmed from low skill capacity of the national counterparts, delayed donor fund disbursement, weak programme design and poor planning at both national and international levels, and contradicting local and Western values and preferences. In one way or another, they all affected the level of national ownership, the sustainability of results achieved, and the ultimate impact of aid.

Achievements and areas requiring improvement

The quest for overall coherence between different aid actors and the application of various aid instruments, as well as the aligning of donor policies and preferences and those of the Government of Afghanistan, was a considerable challenge. Along with difficulties and failures, however, there were also some impressive results achieved in this relatively short in period. Starting with the establishment of a transitional government, the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections, the disarmament and reintegration of troops, the disbandment of many illegally armed groups, and ending with successful support for civil service reform, strengthening of key institutions

of the justice sector, and reform of the police the achievements (UNDP 2009a, UNAMA 2010).

Some 50,000 men were disarmed, demobilized and supported in finding alternative livelihoods. Numerous former field commanders were successfully encouraged to seek peaceful co-option into the political system. Internationally supported de-mining operations have cleared large areas of landmines and explosive remnants of war,⁶⁷ which, together with increased public awareness, reduced the number of victims in 2009 by over 70 percent since 2001 (IRIN 2010). School enrolment has grown in the past five years from approximately 900,000 to nearly 5.4 million. The UNICEF 'Back to School' campaign has increased school enrolment, including girls previously deprived of public education opportunities. The health sector was restructured and the Basic Package of Health Services⁶⁸ was introduced, with 85 percent of the population gaining access to basic health care. The prevalence of malaria and tuberculosis has dropped dramatically (Figure 2.5).

The return and reintegration of 3.5 million refugees and more than one million internally displaced persons was facilitated and managed by 2009. An innovative and timely process has been initiated with the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran and

⁶⁷ Between 1999 and 2008, Afghanistan had the highest number of landmine casualties in the world – 12,069, according to the Landmine Monitor Report 2009. The country also had the highest number of casualties (51) among mine-clearing teams in 2008. In 2001, there were 2,027 casualties reported. The country aims to clear all landmines by 2013, but whether this target is achieved will depend on donor funding of demining operations, security, and the commitment of the warring sides not to plant new mines (Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) 2009, IRIN 2010).

⁶⁸ A programme of the Afghan Ministry of Health and the World Health programme, introducing community health posts, village health centers and district hospitals, and providing, among others, diagnosis and treatment of malaria, TB, diarrhea, acute respiratory infection, distribution of condoms and oral contraception, with subsequent progesterone contraception injections, prenatal, delivery, routine immunization, common childhood diseases, mental care and assistance to disabled (WHO 2005).

Pakistan to enable the focus to shift from refugee return to migration management (UNHCR 2009). More help is required because the flow of returning refugees continues, with those now returning being generally poorer and more likely to be landless than earlier returnees.

Community-driven development projects such as the National Solidarity Programme provided an unprecedented number of people with community development grants and corresponding employment opportunities.⁶⁹ In 2007-2008, close to 280,000 households across Afghanistan had a member participating in cash-for-work or other income-generating programmes, which improved the food situation in 45 percent of participating households. Food-for-work or food aid programmes reached an additional 224,000 households. Altogether over 450,000, or one in seven households, were covered by food support programmes.

According to IMF figures, GDP growth has averaged in excess of 10 percent for the period 2004 to 2007. Annual GDP per capita in 2005 was estimated at US\$253 by the IMF and had risen to US\$344 by 2007 (UNDP 2009a).

⁶⁹ For more detailed information on NSP scale and coverage please see Chapter IV.

Figure 2.7 – Key achievements in Afghanistan 2002-2008

UNAMA has outlined the following key indicators of progress between 2002 and 2008: • Health: 85% of the population has been given access to a basic package of health services. • Social Protection: 2.5 million Afghans have received social support. • Education and Culture: More than 6 million children are enrolled in school. • Agriculture and Rural Development: 32,000 villages have benefitted from development projects. • Natural Resources Management: More than 3 million have benefitted from rural water and sanitation projects. • Infrastructure: 13,150 km of roads have been rehabilitated, improved, or built. • National Army and Police: More than 140,000 policemen and soldiers have been recruited and trained since 2003. • Disarmament and Demining: More than 7.7 million unexploded ordnances have been cleared since 2001. • Democracy and Governance: 75% of voters participated in Afghanistan's first democratic elections in 2004. • Justice and Human Rights: The Constitution adopted in 2004 calls for the protection of human rights. • Economy and Trade: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita has increased by over 70% since 2002. • Media and Telecoms: 75% of Afghans have access to telecommunications, including over 5 million cell phones now in use.⁴¹
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Source: UNAMA 2010

When the Millennium Summit was held during the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2000, Afghanistan was still suffering from ongoing conflict. The country therefore was not represented at the summit and could not participate in the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Only in March 2004 did the Government of Afghanistan endorse the Millennium Declaration as well as the MDGs.

Having lost over two decades to war, the global timetable and benchmarks were modified to fit Afghan local realities. As opposed to globally applied MDGs with a target date of 2015 (with baseline of 1990), the targets for Afghanistan were set for 2020 (with various available baselines between 2002 and 2005).

As in many other fragile countries around the world, Afghanistan struggles with the achievement of most MDGs. However, there are steady indicators of improvement, which makes Afghanistan likely to achieve its extreme poverty reduction goal⁷⁰ by 2020. The country also does better than many of its South Asian neighbours on women's political representation, with about a quarter of seats in the lower house of the National Assembly reserved for women (UNDP 2010a).

Despite notable progress, there are no illusions within the international aid community about the many other issues that need to be addressed in Afghanistan. The 2008 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) reported that 36 percent of population or nine million Afghans live in absolute poverty and are not able to meet their basic needs. The highest poverty rate is among the minority Kuchi population (54 percent of Kuchi), followed by 36 of rural population and 29 percent of urban population living in poverty.

Life expectancy is extremely low at 48.7 years.⁷¹ The mortality rate for children under five years and the proportion of mothers dying in childbirth are among the

⁷⁰ The targets are that proportion of people whose income is less than USD 1 per day decreases by 3% per annum until the year 2020, and that the proportion of people who suffer from hunger decreases by 5% per annum until the year 2020.

⁷¹ The same indicator for Sudan, one of the poorest countries in Africa, is at 61.5 years.

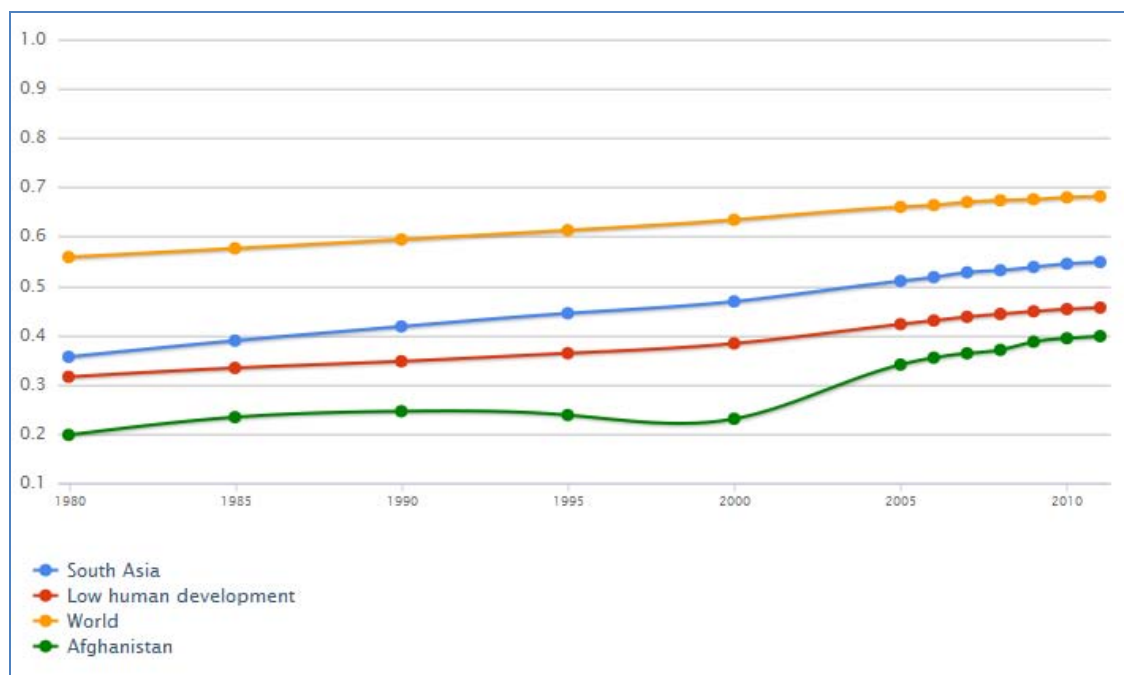
highest in the world⁷² (UNICEF 2010). The literacy rate of 26 percent of the total adult population (12 for females and 39 percent for males) is the fourth lowest in the world (EU 2008).

Mistreatment of women and children, as well as high levels of domestic violence and discrimination, remain among the major challenges to attaining the country's MDGs. The primary victims of human rights violations and war crimes were women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities. Income disparities between men and women are huge, with men earning four times more than women on average.

The number of households covered by the cash-for-work and food-for-work programmes reflects the moderately extensive reach of the programmes, but it also shows how precarious the situation is for much of the population in Afghanistan. Recent drought, earthquakes and floods demonstrate that Afghanistan is very vulnerable to natural disasters (UNDP 2007).

⁷² Child mortality rates are high, with the probability of mortality of children under five of 222 out of every 1000 in the year 2000, and 199 in 2009 (UNICEF 2010). The lifetime risk of maternal death was estimated at 1 in 11 in 2008.

Figure 2.8 - Human Development Index Trends for Afghanistan 1980 – 2010



Source: UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP 2010b)

Given the enormous health problems faced by the Afghan population, the health sector is in need of greater and more comprehensive attention. With the reported massive enrolment of children in schools, the challenge is now to improve the quality of the education, securing necessary facilities and management capacity of the Afghan Ministry of Education. More sources of safe drinking water are required (see for instance DANIDA 2005).

The establishment and support of key budgetary, financial and rural development institutions has been successful, but more progress is needed in the promotion of most other specialized line ministries, including in the key justice and rule of law sector.

Much greater attention is required for the agricultural sector, given its importance to the Afghan economy and well-being of rural population in general, and its interrelation with illicit opium cultivation in particular.

In addressing the above problems through future aid and reconstruction efforts, the international community will have to deal with the constraints the circumstances discussed in this section pose on aid program design and implementation. In particular, and as pinpointed and argued in this section, the practical and operational factors such as the capacity and support of the national government institutions, coordination among donors and agencies, security conditions, corruption and the cultural context, have the potential to influence the effective implementation of aid programmes and should be given an utmost consideration.

In order to better understand these, and identify other influential project implementation factors, in the next Chapter I review the literature that speaks to effective project implementation. I start by reviewing the discussion within the aid expert epistemic community on aid effectiveness and relevant ways to measure aid programme effectiveness, and further proceed with identifying other possible determinants of aid programme and project effectiveness.

CHAPTER III

Understanding, Measuring and Improving Aid Project Effectiveness

In this chapter, I will review the aid and development epistemic community and related discussion on aid project effectiveness which will allow me to identify a measure of project effectiveness that I will rely on in conducting this study. I will then review the existing literature that speaks to the role of the national government's support and of donor coordination in the successful implementation of post-conflict reconstruction and development projects, i.e. at the operational micro level of project implementation on the ground. Further, the review will expand to cover the literature on other factors that might contribute to the effective implementation of international reconstruction and development projects in the field.

3.1 The aid and development epistemic community and related concept of effectiveness

Composition and theoretical grounds

The 'epistemic community'⁷³ of aid experts consists of a wide range of academics, professionals and international civil service staff working for international bilateral and

⁷³ Haas (1992) defines epistemic community as a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular field, and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that field. Scientific knowledge and expertise is the 'glue' that keeps policy actors within this field committed, and is a powerful tool in arguments with opponents of the community. Epistemic communities can have powerful influences on policy-making, some expressing certain political opinions and having links with governmental decision-makers. It is argued that epistemic communities can influence four stages of the policy process: policy innovation, policy diffusion, policy selection and policy persistence. Policy makers are more likely to heed the opinions of an epistemic community if they represent a consensus of opinion (Sutton 1999).

multilateral organizations. Agencies and bodies involved in reconstruction and development include missions mandated by the UN Security Council or General Assembly, which are supported by specialized UN programs and agencies⁷⁴, Bretton Woods institutions, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), bilateral and regional donors, and a large number of non-governmental organizations and charities. Additionally, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the above traditional development actors were joined by civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams as well as private companies.

The body of research and practical experience generated within the aid and development epistemic community, together with the ongoing debate among aid practitioners and academics arguing for and against international intervention and aid, has provided the main source of aid policy adjustment, considerably influencing international and national government policy and decisions taken by the political leadership on international intervention and the provision of aid. Similarly, the debate within the community, and with its opponents (mainly represented by followers of political realism and aid skeptics), examining the lessons learned from concrete cases of engagement in post-conflict and fragile states, has influenced the setting of standards, approaches, and regulations in the design and implementation of international aid programmes.⁷⁵

While there is a range of opinion within the aid and development community on the best approaches to aid, the shared conviction that nations and people in distress

⁷⁴ For the complete organizational chart of the United Nations and its principal organs please see Annex 10.

⁷⁵ Such as for instance the concepts of the R2P, 'do no harm', and the Millennium Development Goals, Human Security Index, and aid effectiveness principles (as per the Paris Declaration (OECD 2005)).

must be helped, and that aid must be provided unifies the numerous members of this community. Aid experts, by virtue of their experience and analysis, believe that aid has the potential to improve lives and living conditions in the recipient states. They try to improve policy and approaches to ensure that the aid has a greater impact and is more sustainable, promoting their interaction and cooperation.⁷⁶

Arguably, the most important international organization, and thus is the most important member of the international aid and development epistemic community is the United Nations (UN). The UN provides a venue for international discussion by member states, and at the same time is an independent institution with its own moral, political, and technical role (Chesterman 2005). From among international institutions present on the ground in recipient countries, only the UN, through its peace-building mandate, may become involved with the politics⁷⁷ of recipient states, whereas the principles of engagement of Bretton Woods institutions – the IMF and the World Bank – prohibit these entities from interfering in the domestic or foreign politics of any recipient or member state (IMF 1997)⁷⁸. Even stronger limitations apply to the engagement and activities of humanitarian aid agencies on the ground. In contrast to development agencies, which have a mandate to collaborate with governments, humanitarian agencies should not be closely involved with national authorities and

⁷⁶ Peter Haas, the author of the concept of epistemic communities, argued that it is in fact the epistemic communities that are behind the occurrence and nature of cooperation at the international level (cited in Thomas 1997, p. 223).

⁷⁷ Many analysts point out that even though the UN is best placed to lead post-conflict reconstruction, there is a need to revise and redesign the UN's involvement and unified approach in aid interventions.

⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the IFIs are key in establishing the economic and financial framework for the transition to peace following mediated peace agreements, as the consequent reconstruction and development programmes require large amounts of technical and financial assistance.

political elites to ensure the impartiality and the equality of distribution of the humanitarian assistance that they provide.

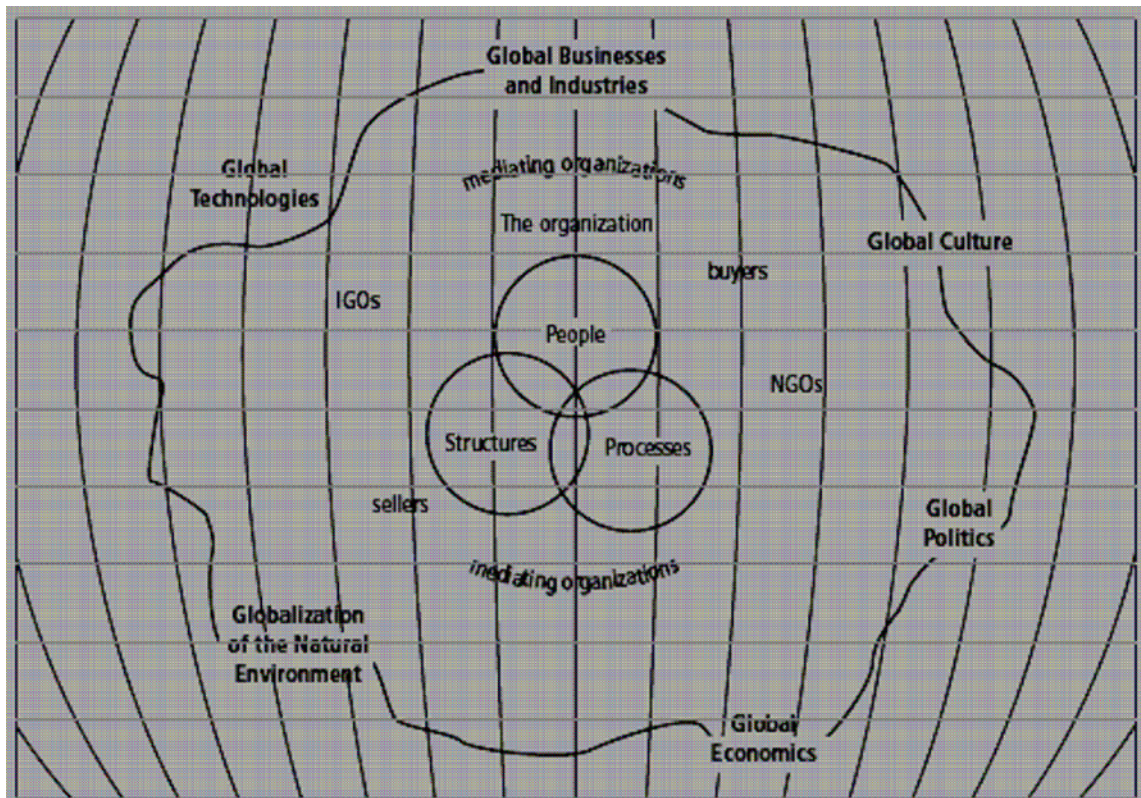
Opponents to the position on the important role of the UN in the international arena, argue that the UN, and all other international organizations, are simply an institutionalized venue for the states to assert their role and pursue their interests, and that international organizations have no authority and power of their own to influence states or exert effect on the international system (Mearsheimer 1994, Waltz 2000).

The position that this study adopts, however, is the one convincingly argued by liberal and constructivist scholars, who assert that states are not, by default, rivals and that they are interdependent in the global system⁷⁹, with international organizations being an important mechanism to manage such interdependence (Sutton 1999, Esty 2001, Parker 2005). International organizations are at the center of such global interconnections, integrating people, processes and structures to shape policies towards a globalised world (Figure 3.1). Authors in these two major schools of theoretical thought in politics and international relations demonstrate that international organizations are independent and potent entities. Authors rebut the view that states assert themselves through international organizations, simply because not all states strive for international dominance. As a result, states do not always manipulate international organizations for their own interest; these organizations can exert influence on the international arena and on the policy process within the states given

⁷⁹ Most vividly argued on the example of global climate change and financial crisis.

that they possess distinctive bodies of knowledge and technical expertise in a certain fields (see, for instance, Kamieniecki eds. 1993, Karns and Mingst 2004).

Figure 3.1



Source: Parker 2005, p.37, in Puscas 2010.

Moreover, constructivists argue that it is the international organizations which promote new theories and related policy implications around the world. Countries which see themselves as belonging to certain global or regional groups or movements based on historic, cultural, geographical or any other unifying grounds, may want to follow one another's policies in an attempt to gain outcomes similar to the ones achieved by their counterpart nations. Often, nations pursue new policies through participation and interaction with international organizations. International

organizations, in turn, rely on their research and evaluation capacity in order to diffuse and promote the successful social and economic policies of developed countries to developing countries (Kahler 1994, Quirk 1994, Dobbin 2007, p.462).

At the operational level, most major international and bilateral aid agencies are similar in how they tend to be structured by thematic area and specialized sector, such as governance and public administration, infrastructure, health and education and agriculture, and by geographical region. For bilateral aid programmes, broad organizational models include 1) cabinet level, fully unified aid agencies which encompass all major programmes and policy and implementation functions (for example, UK's DFID, and Germany's GTZ), 2) aid programmes fully integrated into the ministry of foreign affairs (as with the Netherlands and Denmark), 3) aid policy and allocations made by a ministry of foreign affairs and finance, but implemented by a subcabinet level aid agency (for example, the US's USAID and Japan's JICA), and 4) two subcabinet-level aid agencies, one responsible for research and technical assistance⁸⁰, and another for aid programmes loans and grants (Canada's IDRC and CIDA) (Lancaster et al. 2005, p.44).

Authors also observe that the turnaround of ideas and tactical approaches to aid programme design and delivery is cyclical, (i.e. ideas and policies that were refuted as unsuccessful or difficult to implement are returned and reapplied by new generations of

⁸⁰ This is in order to safeguard the impartiality and quality of research.

aid and development workers)⁸¹ and is driven by the nature of the information flow, analytical discussion within the aid community and by the relatively short cycles of postings of aid specialists on the ground (see for instance Coyone and Pellillo 2010). Ongoing international aid efforts were often juxtaposed with aid and development efforts of ‘benign colonialism’⁸², with authors often arguing that in this case development usually involved expatriate experts staying in country postings for long-term periods, often for life, and even then decades were required for development.

Academics and practitioners alike are actively examining how aid impact and sustainability can be improved, discussing related aspects such as the choice of the right pace for aid interventions, the design and the right mix of aid and state-building components, aid conditionality, the best ways to channel aid, and the difficulties of coordination among proliferating aid agencies and NGOs. The limitations and challenges in the design and delivery of aid in terms institutional thinking limitations, limitations in modernization and development theory come to light (Douglas 1986, Scott 1998). At the policy level, authors from both pro-aid and aid – skeptic sides draw attention to the possible adverse effects of aid, adducing examples of less successful aid operations in Africa and elsewhere. The issues such as moral hazard and aid

⁸¹ A good example is the Integrated Rural Development Programmes promoted by the EU in the early 1980th and encompassed the construction of schools, roads, telecommunications, and all another technical support and institutional capacity building initiatives. After having been abandoned as too complex and difficult to manage, recently such approach has been returned to, with the ‘sustainable rural livelihoods’ approach, which promotes an integrated, comprehensive rural development idea (Thompson 2003).

In Afghanistan, the international community allowed local autonomy in 2001, argued for and supported the creation of a strong central government in 2003, and returned to decentralization in 2006 (Stewart and Knaus 2011).

⁸² A term used to refer to a form of western colonialism in which benefits outweighed risks for indigenous populations, mainly during 1790-1960 (see for instance Doyle 2006).

dependency, the diversion of aid (particularly humanitarian) from the population and in support of authoritarian and repressive regimes, the low accountability of international institutions (particularly relevant in the case of international administrations of post-conflict territories), and the equality of aid distribution are raised in an effort to explore the challenges in delivering effective aid and avoiding causing harm (Bayer 1976, Anderson 1999, Rieff 2003, Moyo 2008).

Concepts of aid effectiveness at macro and micro levels and measurement approaches

In this ongoing quest for policy and operational adjustment to improve aid effectiveness, the criteria applied for weighing and validating achievement and success can be categorized into two levels at which effectiveness is measured: the macro level of the overall impact of aid programmes on the recipient country's economic and social indicators and GDP growth, and the micro level of outputs and outcomes of programmes and projects on the ground (such as for instance the number of schools built, school enrollment rates, children inoculated, drinking water-pumps constructed, etc.).

At the macro level, authors argue that the impact of aid on GDP growth is positive and significant in developing countries, provided that these countries build strong institutions and accept and enforce economic policies of free trade, fiscal discipline, as well as policies of good governance and anti-corruption (Burnside and Dollar 2000). Based on such findings, aid economists and practitioners alike have argued

for aid conditionality – the selective allocation of aid to countries with good policies and strong institutions.

On the other hand, there is also research that indicates that it is impossible to establish any significant correlation between the provision of aid and growth in GDP in fragile and post-conflict recipient countries because 1) most of the aid to these countries is spent on non-economic objectives such as public administration and social services, 2) aid tends to finance consumption rather than investments, and 3) because aid is not provided in isolation and the national growth is influenced by parallel processes ongoing in the society pertaining to trade, investment, or migration, and by donor policies attached to the aid given (Mosley 1987, Boone 1996, Benoeher 2011).

At a micro level of project implementation, the most appropriate criteria for measuring public service and aid project implementation success are project objectives⁸³ (de Wit 1988, p.164). A project would be a waste if it fails to achieve its objectives, or does so inefficiently. But a project would also be a waste if it is not relevant to the needs of the intended beneficiary population or if it duplicates the work done under another project, or if maintaining project benefits is costly (Riddell 2007, p.187). An increased awareness on the side of donors and aid agencies to make aid relevant, efficient, and sustainable resulted in ongoing effort to adopt programmatic and sector-wide planning of aid. But individual projects remain the mode through which such overarching

⁸³ As opposed to business projects which rely on the profit as a criteria to measure success.

programmes are implemented, and it is therefore important to understand how to implement aid projects effectively.

Authors argue that it is possible to identify factors affecting project success or failure, arguing that these factors are usually good indicators of pre-conditions of success or failure. In other words, the presence of success factors does not guarantee success but their absence is likely to lead to failure. Identifying success factors and the causes of failure is very useful in that it provides project owners and other parties involved with the lessons learned from past projects. While the likelihood of replicating the successful experience of one project elsewhere is subject to variations in contexts in which projects are executed each time, preventing past mistakes whilst paying attention to the factors which have proved to lead to success on other projects increases the chances of project success.

Successful implementation of aid projects is important for the aid programmes and policies to be effective. All donor agencies therefore regularly report on their projects and programmes based on the degree to which these projects' objectives have been met in the context of the project budget, duration, and quality of outputs envisaged by the project document.

Similar to macro level considerations of aid impact on growth of the national GDP, in assessing the effectiveness of aid projects at micro level, it is important to remember that not all aid projects are aimed at the generation of economic growth. Some aid projects are intended for humanitarian purposes. Some projects are simply aimed to

improve the living conditions of people. The impact of other projects is hard to measure in full as in addition to quantifiable indicators, they bear an emotional and psychological connotation and value.⁸⁴

This study takes the premise that 1) aid has positive impact on the quality of people's lives in recipient countries, and is a potent tool to prevent conflict relapse in post-conflict situations and that 2) individual projects are the means through which aid is channeled and it is therefore important to examine and improve project implementation practices, as a point of its departure. In the assessment of project implementation practices in post-conflict reconstruction and development, I rely on the micro-level definition of project effectiveness discussed above. The review of the literature that follows immediately after will help pinpointing project effectiveness factors from both conventional [project] management theory, and from international reconstruction and development literature. In the following chapter, I will begin the assessment of aid project implementation effectiveness with a detailed review of three reconstruction and development project implementation cases, setting the stage for a larger-scale systematic quantitative analysis of project implementation experiences in post-conflict Afghanistan in the following chapters.

⁸⁴ Such as demining or disarmament projects. For instance, Thomspson (2003, p.140) writes that 'Numbers are not what mine clearance is about. Attempts to measure contaminated land are meaningless. It is the relative socio-economic impact of the 'suspected' contaminated land that is the issue. [Until its cleared], a minefield exists in the mind. The idea of a minefield is enough to keep people out of a plot of land, a schoolyard, a path to a well.'

3.2 A Review of the Literature

A review of the literature on international aid and development shows that indeed much of the international aid in post-conflict situations is delivered through the traditional ‘project-based’ aid paradigm (OECD/DAC 2006; Renard 2006). That is, development assistance is carried out through sector-specific time-limited activities aimed at delivering specific results. This approach is distinct, e.g., from the structural adjustment paradigm prominent in the 1990s, and the emerging focus on national ownership set forth in the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD/DAC 2008a). Afghanistan can serve as a good example of the project-based approach, with a wide gulf between projects that turned out to be successful in delivering technical assistance and services and those that failed. Larger scale programmes implemented under sector-wide approach principle or with pooled funding from multi-donor trust funds, while more comprehensive and coherent in nature, are also channeled through specific projects (WB 2009a, UN 2009a).

Existing sources that speak to the issue of project effectiveness factors are abundant but rather unsystematic. Contributions to the issues have come from many disciplines, from public policy, public administration, organizational analysis, business administration and management to politics, and international relations. Similarly, significant work has been published in a range of different publications, including peer-reviewed academic journals, but also governmental reports and studies commissioned by

major international bilateral and multilateral aid entities, as well as working papers and other publications intended for policymakers and practitioners working in the field.

By way of organizing and structuring this dispersed body of knowledge for the purpose of this study, it is useful to note that two major streams of theoretical discussion relevant to project effectiveness in the field pervade the literature:

- **Conventional project management literature**, discussing implementation-related factors influencing project success in a regular industrialized country context. It identifies and discusses numerous factors that influence project effectiveness, but does not go beyond considering projects undertaken in peaceful conditions not complicated by the aftermath of a civil or any other type of conflict;
- **International reconstruction and development assistance literature**, discussing similar principles of project success, but also broader, qualitative factors related to project implementation environment in a post-conflict setting, including the national government's support and donor coordination, adds exactly what is missing in the first body of literature in terms of success factors relevant precisely to post-conflict reconstruction and development projects in the field.

It appears that the conventional literature on project success has been influenced by cost-effectiveness theory, various concepts in management, as well as behavioral economics, although this linkage is not always obvious and deliberate. Cost-effectiveness analysis is a form of economic analysis that compares the relative input (costs) and outcomes (effects) of two or more courses of action, considering the optimal

way of achieving a desirable effect of an activity or project. Management theory discusses the concepts of planning, organizing, staffing, leading or directing, and controlling an organization or effort for the purpose of accomplishing a goal. And finally, behavioral economics reflect on human and social, cognitive and emotional factors in people's decision making and professional performance. Specifically, it analyses how people's perception of the task, its importance, their role in the task, reflects on the quality of their performance.

Finally, in this review I also cover the existing empirical evidence on project effectiveness in the field, including studies that consider one factor of effectiveness in isolation, and others that assess a number of factors in combination and relation to each other. I argue that there is a lack of comprehensive and systematic research on the issue of project effectiveness in the field. In particular, no single empirical study considers a comprehensive range of factors relevant to the effectiveness of reconstruction and development projects in the field, and hence, no study was able to identify what factors drive success in field operations, what weight each of them bears on the success, and how they relate and depend upon one another. Finally, I argue that the absence of previous comprehensive research on this issue cannot be explained and justified by the notion that development projects are inherently different and situations in which they are implemented are specific, and therefore projects cannot be compared and no generalization can be drawn.

Conventional Project Management Theory

The conventional project effectiveness literature stems from the perspective that organizations are project based, with projects viewed as the modality to pursue an organization's vision and mission through operationalizing and achieving its objectives (Pinto and Prescott 1990, Archibald 1987, p.499-507, Beck 1983, p.166 – 184, King 1983, p.155-165). Some authors even view projects as temporary organizations within functional organizations (Turner and Muller 2003). Best illustrated in matrix organizations, projects are seen as key organizational vehicles in pursuing a firm's strategy (Galbraith 1973).

The strategic importance of projects and their success is evident, and has fostered numerous studies of the project implementation process aimed at determining why projects succeed or fail. These studies employed different perspectives (Nutt 1989, Keller 1986), but ultimately, they all suggest that the final outcome of projects, their success or failure, is a product of a number of simultaneously present project implementation components (Kerzner 1984, Pinto and Slevin 1988).

The studies that are most relevant for the purpose of this study focus on technical and tactical planning as critical success factors, (Magai and Carr 1988, Pinto and Prescott 1988), arguing that, 'critical planning and tactical factors represent those activities which, if performed well, can increase significantly the likelihood of effective project implementation (Zmud 1984). They also talk of human behavioral factors that influence success (Baker, Murphy and Fisher 1983).

With some variation, almost all authors speak of a similar set of factors that influence project effectiveness, with the table below (Kuen et al. 2008) indicating the frequency and combination in which each factor was mentioned.

Success Factors from the Literature	Pinto (1986)	Kezner (1987)	Pinto & Slevin (1989)	Belassi & Tukei (1996)	Wateridge (1995)	Belout (1996)	Clarke (1999)	Cooke-Davies (2002)	Muller (2005)
Corporate understanding		X	X		X				
Common understanding with stakeholders on success criteria				X					
Executive commitment	X	X	X		X				
Organizational adaptability		X							
Communication	X		X				X		
Project manager selection criteria	X	X	X		X				X
Project manager leadership / empowerment	X	X	X		X				X
Environment			X						
Commitment to planning & control	X	X	X				X		X
Project mission / common goal / direction	X		X				X	X	
Top management support	X		X		X				
Client consultation / acceptance	X	X	X						
Monitor performance and feedback	X		X					X	X
Personnel / teamwork	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Technical task ability	X	X	X						
Trouble shooting / risk management	X		X					X	
Project ownership								X	X
Urgency of project			X		X				
Duration and size of project					X		X	X	
Remarks: "X" success factor(s) that is determined by the researcher either on a conceptual or empirical basis									

Source: Kuen et al. 2008, p.18

In addition to the above set of factors, other authors spoke separately of the importance of quality of staff (Friedlander and Pickle 1968), of how managerial strategies and leadership were found more important than structure, finances, and other factors (Cameron 1986a and 1986b), how technical, political, and cultural factors are influential in achieving organizational success (Tichy 1983), and how behavioral

patterns reflect on organizational effectiveness (Cummings 1983, Lewin and Minton 1986, Lawrence and Lorsch 1967).

More specifically, and demonstrating strong agreement with previous conceptual lists of project success determinants, Pinto and Slevin (1987) developed an empirically derived set of critical success factors'. They have identified ten factors that were 'distinct and were found to be predictive of project success. The authors argue that these factors are general enough to be applied across the board in various organizational contexts and projects types. This set was later used as a reference point in research of similar nature to investigate the role of a sub-sets of project planning and tactical factors during various stages of project implementation cycle, how important these factors are depending on the type of success measure employed (Pinto and Prescott 1990), and most recently, to investigate factors that influence project success in manufacturing industry (Kuen et al. 2008).

This set of factors, or variables, includes the following project characteristics: 1) consistency with organizational vision and mission, 2) top-management's support, 3) planning, 4) client consultation, 5) available technical expertise, 6) quality of personnel, 7) client satisfaction/acceptance, 8) consistent monitoring and reporting, 9) good communication, and finally 10) trouble-shooting.

Below I define and briefly elaborate on each of the ten factors brought out above.

Project mission

It is argued that for project success, it is important that the goals set in a project are in line with the general vision and goals of the organization (Clarke 1999). A project team's awareness of the ultimate goals of the project and its benefits helps define the task clearly, makes team members feel involved and important, and confident about the chances for success (Cooke-Daview 2002). This has been found to improve the performance of the team as a whole.

Top-management's support

Top-management support implies shared responsibility with the project team, responsiveness to the team's requests, including for additional resources if need be (Clarke 1999, Wateridge 1995). Where upper management and project staff agree on the degree of each actor's authority and responsibility, the 'clarity of task' factor identified above is re-enforced. Further benefits for project performance derive where staff is confident in management's support of their decisions, and particular of support in a moment of difficulty or crisis (Muller and Turner 2005).

Project planning

It is through clear work plans that the project team establishes the overall mission, schedules, target milestones, and the degree and type of client relationship for the project (Pinto and Prescott 1988). Planning the project implementation process (Kerzner 1987) allows to verify the technical capabilities of the project team, personnel requirements, and establish the system for monitoring and evaluation. Planning allows for designing a detailed budget with allocations and timelines.

Client consultation / Client acceptance

Some authors argue that client consultations and acceptance is more important in service-oriented projects (Tukel and Rom 2001). Insuring client satisfaction has a repercussion with communication and interaction factor mentioned earlier, and allows for clients to be provided with sufficient information from the start of the project and during its progress (Kerzner 1987, Pinto 1990), having access to project staff in case of a concern.

Involving all potential users of the project results in the implementation process ensures that they have an opportunity to give feedback at early stages (Guzzo 1982), are informed of progress, limitations (what the project is not expected to deliver), and whether their concerns are being heard and reflected upon (Kerzner 1987).

Available technical expertise

Without adequate technical expertise, the successful implementation of specific tasks under the project would be in jeopardy (Kerzner 1987, Lawrence and Lorsch 1967, Wateridge 1995). Experts are the ones to make sure that the right approach/equipment/training program is applied, monitor that other staff members understand it, and verify that it worked well. The quality of personnel is often cited as a key to project success. It is important that the number of staff is sufficient to perform the project tasks, that staff members understand their role in the project (Friedlander and Pickle 1968), and that they have clear job descriptions and performance evaluation plans (Cooke-Davies 2002, Muller and Turner 2005).

Competent project leadership

As a subject for research and analysis, leadership has a reputation for being vague and idiosyncratic, making it a good subject to avoid (Dull 2008). Nonetheless, the issue of leadership continues to fascinate social scientists and manager practitioners alike. Leadership is reviewed and analyzed from various angles of its role in political processes, governance, and introducing and implementation reform in both public and business institutions. In their research on conditions essential for successful organizational change, based on US Government and federal public projects implemented by city, state, and federal agencies, Ingraham et al. (2003, p.152) remark that even though the subject of leadership was not initially intended to be considered under the research project, and in fact authors were advised not to consider it, in every case they found strong performance and good ability of governments and agencies to manage toward results, to build effective management systems, and to align and integrate them in productive ways, they also found a strong leader or leadership team. In contrast, weaker performance in these areas was associated with notable lack of leadership and direction. Leadership was important in both promoting reform at the highest managerial level and, and at the level of middle- and upper-level managers whose concrete actions and daily performance form a vital link between overall strategy, vision for reform, and organizational performance.

In the study of both political and organizational leadership, opinions are divided between authors of the 'biographical' approach, who believe in the strengths and creativity of individual leaders, and the authors who inclined to see leadership in the context of various constraints these leaders face. The first group of authors believes that strong leaders can overcome any obstacles and make the world go by their will by the virtue of their dedication and ability, whereas the second camp argues that political, economic, institutional and cultural constraints limit the performing ability of leaders. In their view, leaders are subject to the variation in such surrounding circumstances and are responding rationally to such constraints and competing incentives. The second group mostly consists of political scientists, who, engaging in this 'agency vs. structure' discussion, attempt to establish patterns and regularities in leadership performance (Jones et al. 1989).

In the study of management, organizational performance and project effectiveness, a special focus is placed on the importance of leaders possessing strong technical, interpersonal, and administrative skills and being involved and able to motivate the team. The importance of project manager's skills and competence for the success of the project is considered not only significant but critical (Kuen et al. 2008, Belassi and Tukel 1996), and project manager's selection criteria has therefore direct influence on the ultimate project success (Kerzner 1987, Pinto and Slevin 1988, Wateridge 1995, Muller 2005).

Pinto and Slevin (1988) identify the 'instrumental' qualities of leadership such as the project leader's adequate technical skills, adequate interpersonal skills, adequate administrative skills, as well as the ability to be actively involved on the project team, motivate team members, and maintain a cohesive project team. This set of instrumental qualities of leadership was applied in later research by Belassi and Tukel (1996), and Kuen et al. (2008) to measure the quality of project leadership and its correlation with project success.

In addition to these technical and instrumental qualities of leadership, Bowles and Renwick (2009) identify qualities of 'moral' leadership such as having strong moral compass, invoking personal trust, maintaining morale, building a record of delivery, having firm moral purpose. The authors argue that 'the greatest success in leadership can be achieved by combining instrumental and moral types of leadership, but that such combination is difficult'.

Consistent monitoring and feedback exercise

Correlated with the planning exercise, consistent monitoring and evaluation provides the team at every stage of the implementation process with timely information that is required to ensure adherence to budget and schedule and availability of adequate manpower and equipment. The general morale of the team can be assessed and consequently improved (Haden 2001, Cooke-Davies 2002, Muller 2005). Regularity of monitoring and evaluation exercise is particularly stressed, calling for regular monitoring meetings and information sharing.

Communication

It is argued that effective performance of an organization is a product of balance between information processing demand and information processing capacity (Tushman and Nadler 1989). A network or other medium to share information on project progress among all key actors (Clarke 1999) makes decisions made and results of planning meetings available, and makes proper follow-up possible. A network arguably also allows for giving and receiving feedback to improve shortcomings, and for the project beneficiaries to convey their concerns.

Trouble-shooting

A final factor viewed as influential in the ultimate success of project implementation is the ability to address unexpected changes in the plan or crises through urgent actions. This may include brain-storming sessions with the project team, (Pinto 1988), or having recourse to external staff with necessary expertise when needed (Cooke-Davies 2002). These are the factors derived from the conventional project implementation literature. In the next section I will present and discuss the findings regarding project success factors that emerged from the review of international reconstruction and development literature.

Review of the International Reconstruction and Development Assistance Literature

The literature on the effectiveness of international reconstruction and development assistance in the field has mainly evolved over the last ten years. It is based on the

experience of major foreign aid programmes in response to extreme poverty, conflict, and natural disaster. Within this strain of literature, the discussion can be split into two major levels. One considers the overall aid effectiveness and its impact at the macro-level of improved economic indicators and security of the country in question. The other looks at a micro level of aid programme implementation practices on the ground. Similarly, the concepts and issues identified at the macro-level discussion are relevant and important in the design of overarching state-building agendas and (where applicable) accompanying military doctrines. Whereas the findings of the literature at the micro level are necessary for the design and implementation of actual programmes and projects on the ground. Often, issues identified and discussed at the macro-level of aid effectiveness are acutely pertinent to the micro-level operations and implementation process, such as for instance the issues of national ownership (and resulting sustainability), the necessity to gain a thorough understanding of the local context and put the entire state-building agenda in this context. In fact, at a closer glance, it would be right to say that all of the new overarching principles defined under the New Aid Agenda (below) find their way and application at the project implementation level. The only difference is that the scope and manifestation of such macro-level issues changes to fit and be applicable to the practical operational micro level of day-to-day project implementation on the ground. In that way, the issue of national ownership, at the level of project implementation manifests itself in the degree of national governments support to the objectives and implementation of a particular programme or project. The issue of

importance of cultural context manifests itself in how local traditions and culture were favorable or not for the implementation of concrete programmes and projects, particularly those that required ushering new, alien concepts.

The literature on the overarching principles of aid delivery, types and modalities of aid is vast, as is the literature that evaluates the implementation of projects through which aid is actually delivered. Both are comprised of the reports of implementing agencies, meticulous academic studies and policy briefs, media publications, transcripts and resolutions of major conferences of donors and aid agencies.

At the macro-level of discourse, the theme of dissatisfaction with the level of aid effectiveness and the results on the ground threads through most of these sources. The experience of Afghanistan is one of the most frequently mentioned cases in this context (UNDG 2005, OECD/DAC 2007, Nixon 2007, Pounds 2007, Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority 2002, Nadiri 2007, JCMB 2006, ActionAid 2007, Rubin, Hamizada and Stoddard 2005).

In addition to criticism of the effectiveness with which available resources have been put to use, authors also point out that the donor community has often fallen short of its commitments and has disbursed less money than pledged (Waldman 2008, WB 2007a, Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan 2007). There is an acute concern that the global financial crisis will lead to a further slashing of donor contributions for aid (CGD 2008, IRIN 2008), at the very instant when the crisis complicates the situation of many developing countries (see for instance, ODI 2008, WB 2008a, Khalilzad 2008).

The low level of aid effectiveness and stagnant levels of donor contributions have put added emphasis on the need to understand and review the principles and approaches in the design and delivery of aid policies and related country strategies. Extended debate and a great amount of research and analysis within the aid epistemic community resulted in the introduction of new principles of aid effectiveness, as set by the Paris Declaration (OECD/DAC 2005).

Particularly relevant to post-conflict state-building, and its reconstruction and development component, the overarching OECD aid effectiveness principles include:

- 1) 'ownership: partner countries exercise effective leadership over development policies and strategies and coordinate development outcomes;
- 2) alignment: donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures;
- 3) harmonization: donors' actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective;
- 4) managing for results: managing resources and improving decision-making for results and;
- 5) mutual accountability: donors and partner countries are accountable for development results'.⁸⁵

National ownership and political support became a fundamental principle of engagement by external actors, with reliance on bottom-up approach to state-building.

⁸⁵ Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, OECD/DAC 2005.

Such bottom-up approach was also found crucial in fostering civil society, in the hope that in the hope that this will cultivate 'enlightened' leadership in the long term. Crucially, arguments and evidence was presented that state-building works best when population rallies behind an 'enlightened' leader, but very little at all will work if they rally behind one who is not (Chesterman, Ignatieff, Thakur 2004, p.10).

At the micro level of project implementation, plus their experience of field operations or the practice of evaluating them from the academic or policy standpoint, authors identify a range of factors which influence the effective implementation of projects in the field (WB 1999, Kwak 2006, OECD/DAC 2005). Authors point out that the sense of local ownership can only result from national counterparts' participation from the early stages of programme design, and incorporation of their local knowledge and views in the project implementation plans. Clear and workable implementation arrangements which should be transparent and agreed to by national counterparts also help ensure national ownership of the implementation process. The failure to do so causes poor or total absence of government commitment, which in turn affects the outcomes of projects. The issue of national ownership and corresponding national government's support and commitment are directly related to the much debated matter of sustainability of project results, and consequent impact of aid. One stemming from another, the role of the national commitment and support has attracted extensive attention and analysis in aid programme implementation and project evaluation reports.

In addition to such overarching political matters as is the ownership and commitment of the national government to project objectives, issues that deal with the actual management and administration of aid programmes on the ground are also discussed at length. Problems of operational coordination among aid agencies (see for instance Hill 1978), inconsistent practices of monitoring, evaluation and reporting, the understaffing and inadequate skill level of national counterparts, poor security conditions are among the themes that inevitably come up in almost all comprehensive reviews. For instance, the World Bank Project Implementation review for the fiscal year 2007 encompassing a portfolio of 533 projects undertaken by the organization around the world, discusses weak project management and other staff capacity as posing a severe bottleneck to implementation. The report also raises the issue of unclear division of responsibilities among public institutions, weak monitoring and evaluation, slow procurement and disbursement issues largely due to limited capacity understanding of these processes and rules by national colleagues, which in turn suggest the need for more training especially during the project inception or launch period (WB 2007b).

Authors also point out that the intrinsic characteristics of the implementation environment of development projects pose special obstacles to project success (Westin 2003, Bastani 1988, Beamish 1993). For instance, cultural and traditional perspectives, including varying attitude towards risk taking, team-work, or safe and secure environment where development and other civilian workers are able to perform their

tasks, are important considerations that reflect on the successful implementation of projects.

Some factors identified in the international reconstruction and development literature resonate with conditions considered crucial to success in the conventional project implementation literature that analyzes business and public projects in stable environments. As we have seen, in conventional project implementation, authors stress the importance of the factors such as 1) strategic vision, 2) strong leadership, 3) sustained political and financial commitment, 4) support of the host government and society, 5) consistent monitoring and evaluation, and 6) adequate personnel resources. In addition to these, the international reconstruction and development project literature adds factors that are solely relevant to the implementation of aid and development programmes, often in post-conflict situations. Mostly derived from the actual experience on the ground in particular post-conflict and fragile situations, these factors are 7) donor coordination, including the types and the intensity/quality of coordination exercise, 8) secure environment, 9) task/sector complexity, 10) scope of coverage, 11) economic factor, 12) cultural factors, 13) corruption factor. These concrete operational and tactical factors also resonate with overarching conditions and consequent requirements in aid delivery process in Afghanistan I have reviewed in the previous chapter. In addition to these factors, and as a result of participant observation field research conducted within one of the UN agencies in Kabul during 2008 and 2009, I include two other factors of the assistance received from the Provincial Reconstruction Teams for the

implementation of a particular project, and the factor of Rest and Recuperation. Below, I briefly define and elaborate on each of these factors.

National government's support

The politics of development aid, particularly development project implementation on the ground, is one of the most discussed and controversial issues. 'Development is always political' (DFID 2008, Christiansen 2006), and numerous authors argue that the national government's commitment and support is crucial for the success of development projects (Byrd and Guimbert 2009, McKechnie 2002, Haden 2001, Stiglitz 1998, Narayan 1995, USAID 2000, OECD/DAC 2001, Kwak 2006, WB 2005b). 'Even the best designed foreign assistance cannot succeed if it is being provided to governments that are uninterested' and '...national commitment increases effort and likelihood of long-term success (Stiglitz 1998).

Moreover, moving away from the paradigm of conditional lending and tied aid (in which plans and conditions of the lending institutions were imposed upon national governments), the international aid community is now advocating for the national government's 'ownership' of development policies and programs. Here we should make a clear distinction: the concept of 'ownership' is intended to put national governments in the 'driver's seat' in terms of policy and implementation decision-making, but most importantly, aid project must make use of national administrative and procurement

systems instead of creating their own (parallel to the ones of the government) which many argue drive qualified national staff out of the governmental structures and into better paid jobs at the international aid agencies, thus eroding the governments potential for improvement and sustainability (Renard 2006, OECD/DAC 2007, Ghani and Lockhart 2008, HEUNI 2006).

Conversely, when there is no political will on the part of the host government to support a certain development project initiative, it has no incentive to improve coordination that would move implementation forward. In some cases, national authorities choose to benefit by dividing the donors, for dueling donors can be a source of duplicated funding and in-kind technical assistance. Uncoordinated donors also become helpless in trying to object to bad policies and corruption in the national government (USAID 2000).

On a more practical level of day-to-day project implementation, Israel (1987) argues that national government's commitment and support was an 'essential ingredient' for successful implementation of the World Bank institutional development projects, and that such conclusion applies not only to institutional development programmes but also to development programmes as a whole.⁸⁶ The author makes an important observation that the degree of the national government's support depends on the interaction and quality of support rendered by the national government and counterpart agencies at various levels of authority. He writes that 'it is necessary to distinguish

⁸⁶ For more detail on this study please see 'Empirical Evidence' clause of this chapter.

between institutional, group, and individual commitment and support' of national counterparts, as there might be official support from the management of the national partner agency, but latent opposition or lack of interest on the part of the individual personnel or groups within the agency.

Thus, a reasonably systematic assessment of the national government's support entails taking into account the support received from various levels of groups that have the power to influence performance for project implementation. Behind any support and commitment there is, of course, a host of political and social factors, says Israel, which project evaluation reports seldom mention.

Donor coordination

Another key component many sources talk of as vital for development project success is donor coordination. It is argued that donor coordination improves efficiency and allows for complementarity in project implementation (Mining 2006, ODI 2006, HEUNI 2006). The major question whether the benefits of coordination outweigh its costs remains hypothetical, as it is difficult to measure the cost of operational dimensions of coordination (WB 1999). The great majority of sources call for coordination and believe that donor coordination allows to save on implementation transaction costs, and allows to avoid duplication and previous mistakes, thus making field operations more effective (DFID 2008b, CIDA 2004, OECD/DAC 2007, EC 2007).

Donor coordination is important in difficult partnerships, - for sharing analyses, establishing one set of criteria for assessment, and for agreeing on the most appropriate terms of engagement, task lead agencies, and building on the comparative advantages of both bilateral and multilateral agencies (OECD/DAC 2001).

However, there are also voices that argue that imposing greater coordination among donors may result in unjustifiably high costs in terms of time and resources spent on negotiations and coordination, and that coordination may cause inter and intra organizational friction due to differing political agendas, development philosophies and priorities, as well as bureaucratic and strategic preferences of each aid agency (Sand 1996, Browne 2007, Thiele 2008, Taylor 2002, JICA 2000, Stratmann 2000, p.13; OECD/DAC 2008b). The donor coordination exercise is not always a positive one also given the time and costs it requires, without guaranteeing the attainment of intended practical results in return for such investment.

Given the segments and stages of international aid complex, the levels of donor coordination can be divided into three broad categories – coordination among international donors governments and agencies at the level of headquarters on common policies and approaches⁸⁷, coordination among donors and partner governments, and coordination among donors on the ground, i.e at the stage of project implementation. The term ‘donor coordination’ is used as a general, universal term for all types of cooperation and coordination activities from information exchange to systematic

⁸⁷ For instance through the adoption of common guiding principles such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD/DAC 2005).

division of labor, common policy and implementation frameworks, and a uniform process of monitoring and evaluation (Bigsten 2005).

Coordination in the field is thought to be a complicated matter even when there is good cooperation at headquarters or at the policy level (Owada 1998). Numerous sources, particularly the agencies with practical experience in post-conflict field operations, point out that it is not just the mere fact of donor coordination, but the type of activities and quality of coordination that influences the success of field operations (WB IEG 2008a, p.95; Stratmann 2000, p.83; Disch 1999). The World Bank, for instance, assesses donor coordination by the criticality of donor coordination to the effectiveness of a certain program, and classifies the quality of the coordination exercise as ‘poor’, ‘modest’, and ‘substantial’(WB 2007b).

Within the realm of coordination at the stage of project implementation, there is a debate about the viability and effectiveness of a number of approaches to coordination. In understanding the role of donor coordination in the effective implementation of development projects, distinguishing between particular types of coordination and consequent modes of project delivery is important since they reflect on the intensity and quality of donor coordination efforts. I therefore discuss these coordination modalities in some detail. Zooming in on the practice of donor coordination in Afghanistan – the focus country of this study, - these coordination modalities can be categorized into two major types: the ‘Bilateral’ approach, based on an ‘old’ aid paradigm of project-based aid,

and the 'Sector-wide approach' that stems from the 'new aid agenda' (WB 2004, USAID 2006, Tondini 2009, Ehrenfeld 2004, Boone 1996, Hjertholm and White 1998).

Bilateral approach

Under the 'bilateral' approach, international multilateral and unilateral development agencies, NGOs, and the military work directly with the recipient government and on the ground, using earmarked funding from certain nations (Ehrenfeld 2004, Macrae 2002). They develop their own analysis of the situation, conduct needs assessment, develop and introduce their own response strategies, and are generally able to exercise close control over the course of the project implementation. The bilateral approach implies a lesser degree of coordination, which usually takes a shape of joint support to small initiatives in the field during the implementation stage. Such coordination can be initiated by the implementing agency if it deems it necessary and feels comfortable with it, but the coordination component is not inherently embedded in this concept in the way it is with the Sector-wide approach which implies a very high level of joint policy and financial interaction (Disch 1999).

The positive aspect of the bilateral approach is that certain countries or agencies may be particularly well-placed to provide certain types of assistance due to long-standing relationships or specific technical skills (Cassen 1994, p.205; Ehrenfeld 2004). The obvious down side is that it allows for the implementing agencies to act in relative isolation from other players, becoming so called 'silos' (Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Stiglitz 1998) and use their own administrative and procurement units – parallel

implementation units PIUs [i.e. parallel to those of the government] (UNDP 2009a) – which is not in line with the philosophy of the new aid agenda of ownership, alignment and harmonization, under which the partner (recipient) government is supposed to be taking policy and strategy decisions and provide overall leadership.

Despite the calls to reduce the number of bilateral projects (UNAMA/SRSG 2008), there are indications that even under the new aid agenda which promotes the Sector-wide approach and pooled funding, many donors still prefer to channel their assistance mainly through a bilateral approach (Knack and Rahman 2007, Tondini 2008, Macrae 2002). In Afghanistan, ‘there are currently more than 30 national embassies and bilateral development agencies active in reconstruction and development, in addition to several United Nations agencies, four development banks and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and about 2,000 NGOs and contractors’ (Khalilzad 2008).

- *Bilateral approach with Lead Nation principle*

There are also a few authors who talk of the ‘Lead Nation’ coordination approach under the old aid paradigm. This concept appears to stem from the practice of multinational military coalition operations. The Lead Nation is defined as ‘the nation with the will and capability, competence, and influence to provide the essential elements of political consultations and [military] leadership to coordinate the planning, introducing, and execution of a coalition [military] operation (Multinational Interoperability Working Group 2000). By the same token, in early 2002, the reform of a large part of the public administration system in Afghanistan was divided among Lead Nations each put in

charge of a specific issues within the ‘security and rule of law’ sector (Jones 2008, Sky 2006). In 2006, this approach was criticized and phased out in light of the introduction of a new aid agenda (Tondini 2009).

- Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)

As defined by the U.S. Center for Army Lessons Learned Handbook on PRTs, a Provincial Reconstruction Team is an interim civil-military unit designed to operate in remote and insecure locations.⁸⁸ They combine military functions of maintaining security with reconstruction efforts in cooperation with international organizations, civil authorities, and multinational forces. Reconstruction efforts may complement and reinforce offensive and defensive operations, or they may be the main effort of an operation.⁸⁹ PRTs were first established in Afghanistan in early 2002.

At the moment, there are 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, led by 13 different nations. Some consist of military forces and civilian personnel from a single nation; others are multinational with contributions from several different countries. They are all led by individual International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) nations. Their mission is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform and reconstruction efforts. However, the security situation in a number of provinces is volatile, and in consequence, access of many development agencies to these areas is limited. Hence, gradually, PRTs have gone

⁸⁸ ‘Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures’. Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL 2011).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

beyond their security mandate and are now actively engaged in development work through their civilian components working on political, economic, humanitarian and social aspects. (NATO 2009, USAID 2006, UNOCHA 2008, Schmidt 2009).

There are generally two types of PRT reconstruction and development activities: projects implemented by the military / Civil-Military Cooperation team, and projects that are delivered or overseen by a foreign national development agency (Waldman 2008). Opinions about the evolution of the PRTs' role are very polarized. Those who support an augmented role argue that PRTs have strong capacity in encouraging good governance and enabling reconstruction and development. They call for the expansion of the development role of PRTs by adding a greater number of civilian professionals to their staff (Tamas 2009, USAID 2006).

Opponents of an expanded role point out that such military-led assistance is more driven by political and security interests than by development needs. Aid is militarized and thus starts to gain a negative connotation with the general population. Opponents also argue that a significant number of projects are not in alignment with provincial or national plans, and that whilst PRT resources and activities have expanded, local government institutions, with significantly smaller budgets, have been under-used and under-developed (Hemming 2007, Olson 2007).

Sector-wide Approach

The Sector-wide Approach is a product of a new aid agenda which pursues the principles of harmonization, alignment, and national ownership for improved aid

effectiveness. Under this approach, funding from donors flows into a single fund/pool (for instance, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund administered by the WB), and supports a single policy and expenditure programme (UNDG 2006). The program is under Government leadership, and participating agencies adopt common principles and strategies across the sector, and increasingly rely on Government procedures to disburse and account for all funds (WB 2004, Brown et al. 2001, Foster 2000, Mbungu 2003, Disch 1999). This approach was intended to replace the bilateral assistance model, and to help the donor community move from a 'supply-driven' to a 'demand-driven' approach, while improving overall aid effectiveness. However, as it was mentioned earlier, the reluctance of a large number of donors to join this initiative might indicate that they are not comfortable with the degree of policy and financial interface with other donors and long-term commitment to the government this approach implies (Tondini 2009, Disch 1999).

Unpacking the concept of donor coordination, in order to assess its impact at the level of day-to-day project implementation on the ground, we rely on the review of donor coordination types and degrees Disch (1999) presents in his study on aid coordination and aid effectiveness. The author writes that 'while international fora are key to improving overarching principles for aid coordination, the country – level mechanisms are the ones that determine to what extent impact is actually achieved'. Country – level coordination fora are usually take the shape of consultative groups, round tables, regular or ad-hoc coordination meetings chaired by the ministries of

finance or planning, working groups at the sector level, and donor community review and coordination meetings chaired by UNDP, the WB, or another specialized leading aid agency⁹⁰. Most importantly for the purpose of this study, the author discusses the content and degrees of coordination efforts on the ground. In-country coordination meetings and discussions mainly revolve around the issues of finding a common ground on policies, principles, and priorities for action. Following these overarching issues, the next step of coordination efforts is aimed at ‘establishing a set of procedures and practices that must be followed, particularly in the field of financial disbursement, accounting and auditing, but also covering areas like procurement, personnel policies, tax and customs treatment, reporting, and policy dialogue’.

Making an important distinction, the author classifies the intensity and commitment to coordination into following three types: consultation, cooperation, and collaboration. The main purpose of consultations is usually for donors to share information and exchange opinions with the intention to gain informal common understanding and action outline. Cooperation implies (and requires) the parties to arrive at ‘a degree of consensus as well as trust’ in order to act in a harmonized manner. For collaboration, the author describes, donors would need to apply one set of administrative procedures, with a ‘conscious effort to ensure that implementation of activities runs as smoothly and seamlessly as possible.’

⁹⁰ For instance, the author brings as an example EU coordinating the activities of its member-states, or the coordination meetings of so-called ‘Like-minded Group’ (LMG) of donors - an informal grouping of donors that in some countries comes together to ‘harmonize positions with a focus on improving on-the ground coordination’.

Where my study goes further in defining and unpacking the concept of coordination on the ground, is in assessing the *mode and frequency* of interaction for the coordination types and methods discussed above.

Strategic vision

The years of experience in post-conflict development assistance show that strategic vision on program goals as well as on the most productive implementation modalities is essential for providing effective interventions (Westin 2003, OECD/DAC 2003, Bourguignon et al. 2008). Aid agencies that exercise questionable strategic judgment in initiating projects in sectors in which they do not have immediate expertise not only assign themselves a difficult task, but also create a highly fragmented development effort in the country.

Strong leadership

Numerous sources highlight the need for strong leadership for the success in delivering assistance in post-conflict situations. Most vividly illustrated by the experience in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, authors argue that in international interventions in the field with insufficiently strong leadership the programs commonly get stalled, whereas the appointment of more capable leaders is being cited as one of the main reasons for successful achievement of agency's objectives at a later stage (Westin 2003, OECD/DAC 2008, Ashdown 2008, Vroom 2000). Leadership is also said to be important for change management in international development and in bringing individual and

collective behavior of development agencies in line with Paris Declaration objectives on aid effectiveness.

At the same time, the question of leadership has generated some controversy. A number of authors have suggested that, while personal qualities, including leadership, are important in the success of projects implemented in industrialized countries, 'they may not be the most useful in developing countries' (Lethem and Cooper 1983), and that 'the inherent complexity and problems associated with international development projects' will challenge and hamper the success of development projects regardless of the quality of the project leadership (Kwak 2006).

Sustained political and financial commitment

Sustained political and financial commitment of donor agencies' top management is a key for the success of these agencies' programs. This is particularly true in conditions of uncertainty in a post-conflict environment, where the tasks are generally more complicated, and where achieving the desired development results might require more time and/or resources. (Westin 2003, WB 2005a, UNODC IEU 2005).

Monitoring and Evaluation

One of the essential components in project implementation success, monitoring and evaluation is advocated for widely, but in practice seems to be receiving insufficient attention (HEUNI 2006, UN 2005, OECD/DAC 2008a). The function of monitoring and evaluation exercises is to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of an organization's activities in relation

to their objectives. This, in turn, enables the implementing agency to systematically reflect on and increase the effectiveness of the programmes and projects (OECD/DAC 2007, WB 2008a, Bourguignon and Sundberg 2007). Evaluations that involve national partners can help promote national government ownership and bolster its support for development programs or projects.

Adequate personnel resources

Effective implementation of development assistance efforts is said to be directly dependant on the availability of sufficient qualified personnel to carry out the activities (Westin 2003, OECD/DAC 2008a). Shortage in personnel, or inadequately qualified staff was pinpointed by a number of evaluation reports as a key reason for limited project success. In Afghanistan, the shortage in personnel in some major development entities was seen as one of the reasons for poor coordination. Lack of staff to work on coordination matters hence in turn reflected negatively on project effectiveness (Waldman 2008, USAID 2000).

Secure environment

Often, in post-conflict conditions, civilian development workers are only able to perform their tasks due to the security support and backing by an international military presence, in the case of Afghanistan, NATO-led ISAF forces. Project effectiveness is intimately related to the security in the operating environment (Westin 2003, Rubin 2006, ICRC 2005). This was the case in Bosnia and Kosovo, but is particularly true in Afghanistan, where throughout the post-conflict period, development aid workers were

at risk due to domestic terrorism, long-standing ethnic and territorial rivalries of warlords, and a rather weak control of the central government over the majority of country's territory. 'Creating a secure environment for development to take pace is a key issue for Afghanistan. The obverse of this is the role of development in creating conditions for peace and stability' (McKechnie 2002).

In fact, security is the main reason why in Afghanistan, most of the development assistance in southern provinces with a volatile security situation is channeled through Provincial Reconstruction Teams – nation-led military contingents in charge of providing security through military means (NATO 2009, Olson 2007 ACBAR 2011). Development agencies do attempt to be present in insecure areas. Yet, security concerns restricted their mobility and access, and this did not fail to reflect in the progress and quality of their performance, whereas in secure and stable localities, the likelihood of success was higher.⁹¹

Sector complexity and task specificity

Observers and practitioners of project and program management in developing countries argue that success and failure in achieving development project objectives is related to the 'hardness' or 'softness' of the task at hand. Hard tasks are usually concrete, well-defined technical tasks such as construction, renovation, provision of equipment.

⁹¹ Proceedings of '3C Conference on Improved results in conflict and fragile situations: Towards a coherent, coordinated, complementary approach', co-organized by the Government of Switzerland/OECD/UN/WB/NATO, 19-20 March 2009, Geneva, Switzerland.

Soft tasks most commonly involve a substantial policy component, defined in broad terms and requiring a good deal of flexibility in the process of implementation. Capacity building efforts might be the best illustration for 'soft' type of interventions. In conditions of post-conflict situations with weak governmental institutions, capacity building usually stands for training of the national institutions' staff on policy formulation, establishment and following clear reporting lines, management information systems, office procedures. But moving away from such a narrow interpretation of capacity building, international aid programmes increasingly attempt to encompass civil society as well as formal institutions of state as a whole, focusing greater attention on the creation of jobs and sustainable livelihoods.

Authors point out that activities and tasks in some disciplines are inherently complex, requiring a good degree of personal judgment and expertise: 'It is easier to build dams and highways than it is to improve the institutions that maintain and manage them' (Israel 1987). These types of tasks are harder to perform in comparison with clear-cut technical activities, and paying close attention to the characteristics of successful projects in these difficult tasks improves performance and thus chances for ultimate project success. Complexity of projects also reduces the likelihood of project success in environments characterized by poor economic and political development (Orr 2004, Dobbins 2008).

In Afghanistan for instance, UNDP under one of its capacity development projects, drafted a comprehensive Manual of Office Procedures for Afghanistan based on

a review of existing procedures and national legislation, and provided the Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan with on-the-job coaching in creating a comprehensive legal and institutional sub-national governance framework, complemented with training on subjects such as reporting, monitoring progress and human resources. Training material was also developed for provincial and district governors on office procedures, gender mainstreaming and human resources processes (UNDP 2009a). Similar programmes of capacity development have been carried out with the Provincial Councils. A Reporting and Management Information System was drafted and training of Management Information System officers was undertaken. Then newly established Independent Directorate of Local Governance, the body dealing with matters of sub-national governance at the Office of the President, was assisted in designing its organizational structure and in drafting staff terms of references and job descriptions. In addition, model Rules of Procedure were prepared for provincial and district governors' offices.

Consideration of **Economic factors**

Some authors argue that the economic situation in the locality of project implementation might reflect on project feasibility and success. That is why per capita income estimates are taken into consideration in the design and strategic planning of project activities, and the change in this indicator sometimes raises the need to revise these strategies, or even revise project objectives in the midst of a project implementation cycle (UNHCR 2001, Kwak 2006, FAO 1991)

Consideration of **Scope of coverage**

Resonating with the task complexity factor, the scope of development projects, i.e. whether project activities cover a single village, province, or the entire country, is known to have influence on the outcomes of development projects, particularly in the conditions of uncertainty in terms of security in a post-conflict setting (WB 2004, Diesch 1999, USAID 2006).

Consideration of **Cultural factors**

Many authors believe that cultural factors are relevant to the success of international development projects in the field. A poor fit of project objectives with local cultural norms, and a lack of knowledge and understanding of customs may lead to the project being rejected by the intended beneficiaries. In order for projects to be successful, their consistency with tradition, values, customs, and beliefs needs to be taken into consideration at both the design and implementation stages. Family planning, immunization campaigns, gender empowerment, and gender-based violence protection initiatives are a good example of projects in which cultural factors are an important component of success (UNFPA 2004, UNICEF 1998, UNIFEM 1999).

3.4 Review of the Empirical Evidence

There have been some efforts to develop a comprehensive explanatory model of project success in a regular industrialized country context. This type of model has been tested using large-n datasets (Pinto and Slevin, 1987, Pino and Prescott 1990, Kuen et al. 2008).

Pinto and Slevin (1987) developed an empirically-derived set of critical success factors demonstrating strong agreement with previous conceptual lists of determinants of project success. Their research identified ten distinct factors which were found to be predictive of project success. Pinto and Prescott (1990) used this set of critical factors in a model of 'tactical' and 'planning' factors to explore changes in the perceived importance of project planning and tactical factors across stages in the project life cycle.

The sample consisted of 408 managers currently involved in projects. Study results showed that the two-factor solution of tactical factors (including technical tasks, monitoring and feedback, communication, and trouble-shooting), and 'planning' factors (such as project mission, project schedule/plans, client consultation, and client acceptance) explained 65 per cent of the variance in project success.

Kuen et al. (2008) investigated the critical factors that played a role in successful project implementation by manufacturing companies in Penang, Malaysia. A set of project success factors (project mission, top management support, client consultation, technical task, personnel competency, client acceptance, trouble shooting, project plan monitoring and effective communication) was tested based on the feedback from 79 respondents who described their experience of successful project implementation.

Kuen et al. identified two dimensions of project success in the manufacturing context - micro and macro project success, and demonstrated empirically that project personnel competency and project mission are critical factors for micro project success,

while top management support and project mission are two main critical factors for macro project success.

As for the sources from the international reconstruction and development assistance domain, the previous research on the issue includes, for instance, a study by Israel (1987) based on a review of 175 evaluations of World Bank-financed projects that included institutional development components. Interesting results were derived through a variety of regression analyses, including a sensitivity analysis, which disclosed a positive correlation of institutional performance with the 'hardness' of the task pursued, and with the degree of political support (commitment). A negative correlation of successful performance was established with the degree of overt political interference. The shortcoming of the analysis is that it is based on a somehow subjective measure of project success which is established by measuring whether 'institution A has been more effective in its own field (sector or subsector) than institution B in its field.

A study by Narayan (1995), conducted a systematic quantitative and qualitative analysis of 121 rural water supply projects by many different agencies throughout the developing world. It focused on the importance of beneficiary participation for the success of the project and showed that national beneficiary participation and support was more significant than any other factor in achieving functioning water systems and in promoting local capacity. The quality of national participation and support depended on local demand and organization, agency autonomy, and the degree to which agencies were committed to local participation in the project implementation process. The study

features a careful and thorough analytical work, and its only shortcoming is that it is limited to project in one sector.

A study by Manor et al. (2007), based on a desk review and case studies of eight development initiatives in six less developed countries - Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste and Uganda, examines program design and implementation process and points at the factors such as national ownership and donor coordination having a positive impact on development initiatives results, at the same time bringing examples of how a number of UN development projects in Mozambique and Cambodia were implemented effectively on a bilateral basis. This study provides a rich, real-world project implementation account and is rather informative of the pitfalls in the process as well as of the best practices in delivering aid in various contexts. However, it is a descriptive, qualitative narrative and is not supported by a systematic analysis of a sufficiently large number of projects.

McCulloch (1991) made the most serious attempt to date at developing an explanatory model of the effectiveness of aid projects in the field, based on a review of the projects carried out by the UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA) during the 1990. In his study, the author covers factors such as identifying implementation tasks; assessing the management capacity of the recipient; determining the requirements for field management; selecting a field management approach; allocating field management responsibilities; resourcing, equipping and supporting field management; delegating authority to field management; setting performance criteria for field

management; and monitoring field management's performance. However, the author does not test the model empirically. Lethem and Cooper (1983) published a study on managing projects in the field that is based on a qualitative review of several successful undertakings of the World Bank. The author argues that assistance in 'non-engineering' areas, i.e. the areas where intervention blueprints are not strictly defined and do not have the precision of engineering solutions, is harder to deliver. For instance, assistance in policy design or capacity building is more complex than assistance in architectural and construction works, for it requires a thorough understanding of the society, culture, and usually takes behavioral change in the recipient. The author suggests that the success of this type of assistance appears to depend on three factors such as the commitment of all parties concerned, careful design of the assistance intervention, and handling this assistance with flexibility, as a process and not as a blueprint.

A more recent attempt undertaken by Manza (2008) seeks to determine whether the factors such as project type, cost, duration, and location influence project success. The study is based on a field survey of 176 American reconstruction projects in southern Iraq, in which the author conducted his own coding of project success and failure based on a measure of whether complete construction projects were used as intended in the project document. For instance, an elementary school that, when surveyed, was serving as a headquarters for a militia unit, was coded as a failure. The results of the study show some interesting patterns. A negative relationship between increased project cost and project success was established, as well as between project duration and project success.

There is statistically significant correlation between project type and project success, with the highest success rates of roads and bridges, education, justice and public safety and telecommunications construction projects. Due to data limitations, the results on the relationship between project location and project success were statistically insignificant. The study offers an interesting perspective on project implementation in an environment complicated by post-war insurgency and weak national government, providing a quantitative backing for hypotheses, which is a rather rare quality of such studies given the complexity and the danger of data collection. One small shortcoming of this study is that it employs a dichotomous measure of dependent variable of project success. Also, the statistical analyses of the study is conducted using chi-square and cross-tabulations by success and one of the factors, without analyzing the interplay of the factors and how they weigh one on another and act in combination.

As seen, a review of the literature points out many possible drivers of project success, but also reveals the gaps and helps identify ways in which research on the role of the national government's support and donor coordination exercise, together with other factors of project effectiveness in the post-conflict field setting, could be improved.

The review shows that the works that have been published on the role of the national government's support and donor coordination, together with other possible explanatory factors of project effectiveness of post-conflict development projects in the field only partially explain project success in a post-conflict field setting. Existing

empirical evidence either covers a limited set of factors influencing project success, tends to cover projects implemented by a single agency and sometimes only in a particular sector, or is mostly or entirely qualitative.

The next chapter is dedicated to a detailed qualitative review of three reconstruction and development projects implemented in post-Taliban Afghanistan and that achieved various levels of success.

CHAPTER IV

Aid Initiatives and their Varying Record of Success - a Qualitative Review

Post-conflict reconstruction and development initiatives are conceived and designed with good intentions at heart and a goal of achieving the objectives as set in the project document, and attaining the intended positive impact on the beneficiary population. They are similarly designed and funded by multilateral or bilateral donors, are implemented by the international project team on the ground, and in cooperation with the national counterpart agency. One would imagine, they thus would have similar chances for success. In reality however, despite such overarching similarities in funding and implementation arrangements, or even in the peculiarities of design, and the sector of intervention, some of the projects do not fare as well as others in their implementation success rates.

This chapter will illustrate three cases, three international aid initiatives in Afghanistan, with a detailed account of the objectives, target populations, implementation modalities and activities, stakeholders involved, and the (varying) outcomes achieved. For someone who is familiar with the international aid programme in Afghanistan and its ups and downs, these projects may be rather familiar, representing vivid examples of success, failure, and mixed results. This review is based on the criteria of micro-level project effectiveness identified and argued for in the previous Chapter.

The three cases were selected relying on purposive sampling technique of *critical case sampling*, which is usually used in order to assess whether a phenomenon and related research puzzle are worth investigating further. The main criterion for critical case selection is that the case should be particularly convincing and useful in explaining the phenomenon of interest (Kuzel 1999, p.40, Given ed. 2008). In qualitative studies employing critical case sampling, a single case (or a small number of cases) can be used in explaining the phenomenon of interest, allowing the researcher to argue that "If it happens there, it will happen anywhere" (Patton 2002, p.237). Whilst such critical cases should not be used to make statistical generalizations In mixed methods research an assessment of the phenomenon through critical case sampling provides the researcher with compelling insight, creating a fruitful ground for embarking on a more rigorous, quantitative assessment of the phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie et al 2007, p.285).

With such rationale in mind, the following three particular cases were selected in order to illustrate and explain how projects with seemingly equal chances for success ended up achieving rather different implementation success rates *due to presence or lack of certain factors*. An up-close review of approaches to implementation in these three cases, certain tactics employed, presence of certain implementation conditions and factors that the project could (or could not) rely on in balancing out its performance during challenging moments of implementation, provides a telling account of the importance and influence of a range of implementation factors. This detailed case study review and the case-by-case identification of particular implementation tactics and

factors serves as an introduction, setting the stage for a more systematic and rigorous assessment of the factors behind project implementation success undertaken further in this study.

First, the case of the National Solidarity Programme, a successful flagship development programme of the Afghan Government and the World Bank, helps to demonstrate what factors were present and what effective tactics were employed to achieve and even go beyond project planned targets.

Further on, the case of the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund brings to light some nuanced project implementation components (most importantly, but not exclusively) pertaining to project leadership and national government's support and capacity. This case demonstrates how these factors can gravely affect the overall success of the project, leading to ultimate failure.

And finally, the experience of the Animal Health and Development Programme implementation shows how the presence of certain positive implementation factors, such as strong leadership for instance, and the improvement of circumstances with regard to personalities and cultural differences, can steer the initially problematic project and make it achieve, if not full, but credible results.

4.1 National Solidarity Programme – Phase I ⁹²

Initiated in 2002, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) is the largest reconstruction and development program in Afghanistan. Administered by the World Bank and implemented by the Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the project is one of the three⁹³ community driven development (CDD) projects aiming to reach rural communities across Afghanistan and address their needs using participatory approaches. The design of the project drew on the World Bank's earlier successful experience in community driven development, such as for instance the Kecamatan program in Indonesia.⁹⁴

Project objectives and results

NSP objectives reflected priorities identified by the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, aiming to reduce poverty and improve local livelihoods. A significant political incentive for launching the NSP was to strengthen local level governance in order to promote alternatives to the authority and leadership of former warlords at the village and community level. The new government also needed to expand its legitimacy

⁹² NSP Phase 0 (as part of the Emergency Community Empowerment and Public Works Project) - June 2002/Dec 2004; NSP Phase I – Jan 2005/ March 2007; NSP Phase II – April 2007/ March 2010.

⁹³ Also called community based development, three CDD projects were funded and implemented under the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF): National Solidarity Programme (NSP), National Rural Access Program (NRAP), and Microfinance Investment Support Facility (MISFA).

⁹⁴ NSP is a type of development program known as community-driven development (CDD). Mainly due to their emphasis on involving village communities in sub-project development and implementation, CDD programs have become very popular as a mechanism to deliver development services in rural areas, often through the creation of democratically elected village development councils. Such modality, it is believed, allows for the actual needs of rural communities to be addressed as priority, which in turn makes the beneficiaries and stakeholders more engaged, improving the ultimate ownership of project results. It provides block grants of approximately Rp. 500 million to 1.5 billion (approximately US\$50,000 to US\$150,000) to sub-districts (Kecamatan) depending upon population size. Villagers engage in a participatory planning and decision-making process to allocate those resources for their self-defined development needs and priorities. KDP focuses on Indonesia's poorest rural communities.

to the provinces by demonstrating to local population its ability to improve life conditions after years of conflict and following a recent drought⁹⁵ (WB 2007b, WB 2008c).

The primary project beneficiaries were village communities, who through a participatory planning process would select sub-projects that addressed their needs for local reconstruction and development. Secondary beneficiaries, whose operational and skill capacity was enhanced from their involvement in the project, were the implementing Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Facilitating Partner agencies providing implementation assistance (WB ARTF 2007c, CIDA 2007).

The idea was that at a village-level, communities would elect Community Development Councils (CDCs), which were required to be elected by a general vote, and have women representation. The task of the CDCs was to discuss and decide on their local development needs and priorities, develop relevant proposals, apply and receive grants to implement their sub-projects, - using local labor to satisfy their local community needs. The implementation modalities were also decided by the communities. Thus, the Project provided assistance for the reconstruction and development of communities, while at the same time promoted local governance (Scanteam 2005, IWA 2007)

⁹⁵ From 1999 to 2002, Afghanistan was hit by a severe drought, which, coupled by the aftermath of conflict, resulted in substantial population displacement and deterioration of the quality of livelihoods.

The Sub-projects covered the issues of infrastructure such as 1) water supply, 2) transport, 3) electric power and 4) irrigation, all creating local employment opportunities. In practice, this meant rehabilitating protected sources for drinking water, installing electric generation infrastructure, resurfacing roads and bridges connecting villages with the neighboring communities and districts, and constructing or rehabilitating sources of irrigation for agricultural needs, thus improving villagers access to safe drinking water, electricity supply, more stable transpiration connection (especially in winter conditions), and water for irrigation.

In turn, the improvement of transportation infrastructure and the increased availability of safe drinking water were to have, albeit indirect, positive impact on the access of villagers to better health and education. The requirement of women participation in CDCs and their involvement in decision making was expected to shift the attitude towards women in community, thus indirectly causing improved access of women and girls to health and education⁹⁶ (WB ARTF 2008c, Disch 2008).

By the end of 2007, the Project has approved and funded 22,458 community development sub-projects. 11,372 of these sub-projects were completed. By March 2008 over 37,500 sub-project proposals have been received, over 96% of these have been approved and half were completed. 20,500 communities have elected CDCs, and nearly 20,200 community plans were developed.

⁹⁶ With a few exceptions, NSP generally did not fund the construction of schools or clinics or the provision of health services.

Total block grant disbursements to community bank accounts as of mid-April 2008 were over USD 455 million. Water and sanitation, and transport were the two major sectors of intervention. The sub-projects have also financed 17 million labor days, creating important additional income for these rural communities (WB 2007b).

The objective of at least 90% of the participating communities to contribute 10% of sub-project costs was also achieved with all participating communities contributing on average 14.5% of sub-project costs by the end of March 2007 (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

The number of Community Development Councils (CDCs) elected, number of villages with community development plans, and the percentage of women who participated in CDC elections exceeded the initially set project objectives (WB 2007b). Despite the severe gender isolation in rural Afghanistan, participation of women in CDC election was often reported above 40%, and on average, 35% of the CDC representatives were female⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ A key constraint was the difficulty in recruiting local female staff for the Facilitating Partner NGOs.

Figure 4.1 – Development Objectives indicators

(a) PDO Indicator(s)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents)	Formally Revised Target Values	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Years
Indicator 1 :	Number of Community Development Councils (CDCs) elected.			
Value quantitative or Qualitative)	6,181 (Baseline is output achieved by the ECEPWP by Dec. 31 2004)	8,334 (ie 80% of total number of target villages, which is 10,417).		16,502
Date achieved	12/31/2004	03/31/2007		03/31/2007
Comments (incl. % achievement)	Within the project period from 01/01/2005 till 03/31/2007, 10,321 CDCs were elected representing 124% achievement of the target of 8,334 for the period			
Indicator 2 :	Number of villages with community development plans.			
Value quantitative or Qualitative)	6,181 (Baseline is output achieved by the ECEPWP by Dec. 31 2004)	8,000		16,263
Date achieved	12/31/2004	03/31/2007		03/31/2007
Comments (incl. % achievement)	Within the project period from 01/01/2005 till 03/31/2007, 10,082 CDPs were developed representing a 126% achievement of the target of 8,000 for the period.			
Indicator 3 :	Percentage of women who participate in CDC elections.			
Value quantitative or Qualitative)	>90% (Baseline is output achieved by the ECEPWP by Dec. 31 2004)	40%		>50%
Date achieved	12/31/2004	03/31/2007		03/31/2007
Indicator 4 :	Percentage of communities contributing 10% of sub-project costs.			
Value quantitative or Qualitative)	>90%(Baseline is output achieved by the ECEPWP by Dec. 31 2004)	90%		100%
Date achieved	12/31/2004	03/31/2007		03/31/2007
Comments (incl. % achievement)	The average community contribution is assessed to be 14.5% equivalent to US\$32 million.			

Source: World Bank, 2007b

Figure 4.2

(b) Intermediate Outcome Indicator(s)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents)	Formally Revised Target Values	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Years
Indicator 1 :	Number of villages with completed sub-projects (with certificate of completion)			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	53(Baseline is output achieved by the ECEPWP by Dec. 31 2004)	4,167 (ie 50% of number of villages where CDCs are elected).		10,410
Date achieved	12/31/2004	03/31/2007		03/31/2007
Comments (incl. % achievement)	Within the project period from 01/01/2005 till 03/31/2007, the achievement is 10,357 which is 250% above target of 4,167 for the period.			
Indicator 2 :	Number of families benefited (ie. in villages that have received at least part of their block grants).			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	496,833 (Baseline is output achieved by the ECEPWP by Dec. 31 2004)	1,260,000		2,216,917
Date achieved	12/31/2004	03/31/2007		03/31/2007
Comments (incl. % achievement)	Within the project period from 01/01/2005 till 03/31/2007, the achievement is 1,720,084 beneficiary families, which is 138% above target of 1.25 million families for the period.			

Source: World Bank, 2007b

The statistics of investment and scope of coverage were impressive, and all stakeholders as well as observers believed that the NSP has produced important positive results. A World Bank evaluation conducted in late 2007⁹⁸ gave the programme a ‘highly satisfactory’ ranking, reporting that NSP sub-projects have had reached about 2 million families in rural Afghanistan. Over a half of the families that were reached by the Project were classified as moderately to extremely poor families⁹⁹. It was estimated that each NSP beneficiary family have had immediate savings of USD65 per year, while it

⁹⁸ For the period of 2005-2007, and taking the achievements under the Programme by the end of 2004 as baseline.

⁹⁹ The estimated poverty threshold in Afghanistan in 2007 was at the level of USD 115 per capita per year sufficient to buy 2,100 calories of food per capita per day.

was expected that the access given to the infrastructure and facilities constructed under the Project would have a longer poverty reduction effect.

For instance, power infrastructure sub-projects connected approximately 193,000 rural families to the electric grid, over a half of which were classified as moderately to extremely poor. About half of the 11,372 projects completed by the end of 2007 have benefited the rural communities for more than a year since their completion (WB 2008b).

Economic, social and political impacts of the NSP were constantly monitored by the NSP team at MRRD and the World Bank missions. A sample of 22 sub-projects evaluated in 2008 showed economic rates of return (ERR) averaging 26.3 percent to 60.8 percent, with an overall ERR weighted average of 38.2 percent. The highest ERR, at an average of 60.8 percent, was observed in water supply projects due to time and costs saved for water collection. Employing local labor for sub-projects often cost 50 percent or less than the lowest cost offered by a commercial provider (WB 2008b).

On the social and political front, a case study assessment of 18 CDCs across Afghanistan, conducted as part of the mid-term evaluation in 2006, reported that the CDCs were asserting their role as local governance entities. While the composition and functions of various CDCs did vary, CDCs in general became a functional tool for the communities to review their problems, identifying most pressing needs, and addressing them. The employed modality for resource allocation and implementation of sub-projects was favorable for the ownership of sub-projects by the local communities. NSP

process also increased the demand for accountability and transparency in communities implementing sub-projects.

In addition to the empowerment of the people (women in particular), and promoting the concept of democratic governance at the community level, most importantly, NSP lead to people's improved perception of the Government and donors for undertaking concrete projects benefiting real people¹⁰⁰. Having seen programmes tangible results, communities participating in NSP had a more favorable opinion of the government that non-NSP communities did not share. (York University 2006, WB 2007a, WB 2007b).

While the reviews of the NSP were exceptionally favorable, questions as to the impact of the programme evaluated in a more rigorous quantitative way was still not fully satisfied. A more recent, and long-awaited assessment of the Project conducted by a team of researchers supported by Harvard University, took to fill in this gap.

The evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the first phase of the NSP was based on randomized controlled trials comparing 250 villages covered by NSP with 250 villages not yet participating in the program. These 500 villages span 10 districts in Balkh, Baghlan, Daykhundi, Ghor, Herat, and Nangarhar provinces. The study examined the impact of NSP on village governance, political attitudes and social cohesion, access to infrastructure, services, and utilities, as well as rural economic

¹⁰⁰ The NSP's 70% outreach to rural communities by 2007 has improved the Government's visibility and legitimacy at sub-national and community level. In many communities, this was for the first time that people saw real results delivered by the Government. In conditions of Afghanistan, Government's legitimacy was and remains crucial for maintaining stability in the country.

activity¹⁰¹. The results of the interim programme impact assessment, based on the first follow-up survey, showed that at this stage of program implementation, NSP has indeed increased villagers' access to services, altering the structure of village governance, and changing political and social attitudes (Beath et al. 2010).

On the governance side, the findings of the study indicated that the NSP induced changes in village governance by creating functional village councils and transferring some authority from tribal elders to these councils. The program also improved villagers' perceptions 'of a wide range of government figures'.

On the development side, initial findings of the study indicated that NSP has resulted in improvements in villagers' access to services and 'perceptions of well-being'. The data from villages with completed projects showed a strong positive impact of drinking water projects on the use of installed water pumps and the availability of safe drinking water. A strong impact on connectivity and usage of electricity was also observed following the few completed electricity projects.

On the gender side, NSP was found to have increased the engagement of women in village community life, 'while also increasing respect for senior women in the village and making men more open to female participation in local governance'. Participation in the Project have also increased the availability of support groups for women and reduced 'extreme unhappiness' among women (Beath et al. 2010).

¹⁰¹ Indicators obtained at this stage in the study covered the activity and resulting impacts of the program immediately after CDC elections and the identification and implementation of projects, but before the completion of many projects. As sub-projects usually take 18–24 months to complete, with additional 6 month for the initial stage of CDCs election and decision-making on the kind of sub-projects. Accordingly, more results and related data was available to assess the impact of the program on village governance and political attitudes and social cohesion were based on more, with weaker effects expected on access to services and economic activity, which normally take longer to materialize.

Some of the concrete examples of infrastructure sub-projects include the rehabilitation of 1.5 Km length of irrigation system In Zard Sang CDC located in Bamyan, where 255 families were cultivating 2000 jerib¹⁰² of agriculture land, out of which 300 jerib was out of reach of the current irrigation capacity to supply water for wheat and potato fields. The sub-project was implemented with an NSP grant of 1,072.372 Afghani (approximately USD 21,500) and 10% of community contribution, bringing water to the remaining plot of land and making it suitable for cultivation, while creating about 2300 man days of skilled and unskilled labour.

A micro-hydro power project, and a project by women's CDC sub-committee to provide tailoring and literacy training to women in the two communities, were two projects selected by the local CDC as priority in Khisraw and Istakan villages in Badakhshan. The power generation facility constructed with an NSP grant of USD39,000 brought electricity for 12 hours each day to all 190 households (nearly 2,000 people), improving lives in the two communities which used to be dependent on kerosene lamps. In both villages a 10% contribution towards the cost of the project was made through small financial contributions and in-kind support by provision of raw materials and unskilled labor.

Over the eight months of project implementation, the Facilitating Partner – AfghanAid, assisted the CDC in procuring engineers and skilled labor, necessary materials and staff to oversee the project. The cost of power supply of 15Afs (USD 3) per

¹⁰² One jerib is equal to 2 km² of land area

family per month goes to pay for the hydro-power station maintenance man, with CDC keeping the surplus for contingency needs for the power station itself, or other emergencies in the village¹⁰³.

The electricity from the new power station allows 190 boys and girls in Istakan's 2 schools more time and better light for studying in the evening, while the general population of the village gained an improved access to information on local, national and international news on television and radio. Women in two villages are benefiting from the electricity both in running the household and from practicing newly gained tailoring skills. Tailoring not only provided an additional important source of income, but also helped raise these women's self-esteem and social status. In addition to making clothes for the members of the household, as well as for clients in the village (for a fee), some of the women were planning to offer tailoring training to other women for a small fee (WB 2007b).

Thus, despite initial skepticism of the village communities towards the Project when it was just initiated, in May 2005 at the meeting of CDC representatives from 33 provinces, the delegates issued a Declaration requesting the President and the Cabinet to accept the CDCs as legal and constitutional councils, involve CDCs in the Governmental planning process, use the capacity of the CDCs for the work of relevant line ministries at the provincial, district, and village level¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰³ Such as or instance the flood damage in May 2007.

¹⁰⁴ The Declaration of 33 province CDC Members issued at the Heart Solidarity Exchange, May 2005.

A CDC by-law was signed by the President in January 2007, and had been endorsed by the inter-ministerial NSP Steering Committee headed by a vice-president, requiring government agencies, NGOs, and other aid and development programs working at the village level to make use of CDCs mechanism as the entry point for their reconstruction and development initiatives.

To date, NSP is considered a flagship programme of the Afghan Government, and one of the, if not the most successful reconstruction and development initiative in Afghanistan.

Implementation process and lessons learned

A few valuable observations can be derived from the experience of the NSP implementation process. The Programme was designed through a series of consultations with the representatives of MRRD, Afghan and international NGOs that were to act as Facilitating Partners, and the World Bank project implementation task team. Program's budget was co-financed by the Governments of Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, and through the multi-donor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The Project began as part of the Emergency Community Empowerment and Public Works Project (ECEPWP) in June 2002. A year later, becoming a fully fledged independent programme under Afghanistan's National Development Framework, the Project had two major directions of implementation activities at the village level - the creation of a gender-balanced Community Development Council

(CDC) through a secret-ballot general election, and - the disbursement of grants with a maximum of \$60,000 per village (USD 200 per family), to support the implementation of projects selected, designed, and managed by the CDC in consultation with the village community¹⁰⁵.

Arrangements to address weak national counterpart capacity

The concept of community driven development (CDD) was a simple but new approach for the delivery of aid in Afghanistan, and the first time when a line ministry was involved in the implementation of a CDD project despite its initial weak capacity to do so. To address the issue of weak capacity at MRRD, institutional arrangements were made to provide assistance and coaching by bringing on board an Oversight Consultant (OC) and outsource certain activities to a group of Facilitating Partners (FPs).

Facilitating Partners (initially 21, and later 29) were specialized NGOs¹⁰⁶ that were contracted by the MRRD and assisted with the social mobilization and election of CDCs, sub-project preparation and implementation, and capacity building for communities in Districts covered by the NSP across Afghanistan. This in particular implies assisting communities with CDC elections, preparing sub-project proposals, supervising the implementation, and improving CDCs capacity in procuring goods and

¹⁰⁵ The WB economic and financial analysis (2007) states that a grant of USD 60,000 corresponds to the construction cost of a quality primary school. An average village, consisting of approximately 150 families and totaling to about 900 people, would thus be entitled to a grant of USD 26,000 which would be disbursed for one or several approved sub-projects, and under a condition of contributing of at least 10 percent of the cost of the sub-project.

¹⁰⁶ NSP FPs included NGOs such as Care International, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, AfghanAid, AKDN. The full list of FPs and respective provinces covered is in Annex 8 – NSP Facilitating Partners. In 2004, Altai Consulting conducted an independent evaluation of the Facilitating Partners performance and reported a broad variation in FPs capabilities, as a result of which a few weak FPs were released and the remaining ones were given an enhanced capacity building assistance from the OC.

services. Outsourcing and reliance FPs was a costly component ¹⁰⁷ of project implementation, but was indispensable for the quality implementation of the project.

Nevertheless, responding to concerns on projects high delivery costs, and once the programme gained experience and was well on track after initial years, by 2006 the cost-effectiveness analysis showed that programme facilitation costs came down to 21 percent of the block grants, which is below 25 percent envisaged by the project.

An oversight consultant ¹⁰⁸ supported MRRD with regard to project management, disbursement of block grants to communities, monitoring, and capacity building for MRRD and Facilitating Partners. In early stages of project implementation, MRRD, as the national implementing agency, was not familiar and ready to deal with the concept and the operational application of community driven development and related procurement and financial management tasks. Capacity building measures that were put in place, later allowed for the NSP Management Unit within MRRD to take on key management and planning roles, with procurement needs starting to be handled within the ministry (WB 2007b, WB 2008c).

Support from the national counterpart agency

Consistently strong commitment, support and action from MRRD management and staff has enabled the project to scale up substantially and exceed the targets for social

¹⁰⁷ Particularly during the first year of project implementation, delivery costs constituted 61.7% of block grants, in other words it cost 62 cents to deliver a dollar of block grant.

¹⁰⁸ In 2006, NSP Oversight Consultant role was performed by German Development Agency (GTZ), with the WB supervisory mission later that year giving a very positive assessment of GTZ performance.

mobilization of communities, election of CDCs, sub-project preparation and appraisal, and initiation of block grant disbursement for approved sub-projects. This has in turn convinced other donors beside IDA to provide the co-financing that has underwritten the expansion of project activities.

Ex-ante coordination efforts

In addition to joint tripartite project design efforts (with MRRD, the World Bank, and Facilitating Partners), ex-ante (pre-implementation) coordination and consultations between MRRD and Facilitating Partners regarding the project approach, created a shared vision and commitment to the NSP. Stakeholders involved in NSP implementation believe that it is because of such initial trust-building and cohesion that the Facilitating Partners remained committed and continued their work under difficult conditions, even on the occasions when the disbursement of contractual payments to cover their operating costs were significantly delayed for technical and bureaucratic reasons.

Pre-implementation discussions held with local communities on the social and cultural values of a particular region, and the potential spoilers of the NSP process, indicated at the importance the local population attached to respecting Afghan culture

and religion and involving religious and tribal elders in the community mobilization and decision-making process under NSP (Maynard 2007)¹⁰⁹.

Consideration of local cultural and security context

Experience showed that coordination and involvement of traditional tribal leaders in the process of CDC establishment was a key in promoting strong community support and ownership of the Project, and in avoiding destabilization of traditional village or community authority balance by ignoring traditional leaders, thus further complicating intra-community tensions if such existed.

In order not to abandon work in highly insecure areas, an agreement was made that the Facilitating Partners would engage local NGOs as a subcontractor if appropriate and possible, as well as train experienced local CDC members in the nearest less insecure locations. Trained CDC representatives then could act as community Facilitators, holding workshops and helping the communities in highly insecure districts elect their Committees and develop their Community Development Plans and prepare related sub-projects. The elected CDC officials will then come to safer areas, such as the provincial capital, for training by the Facilitating Partners on the NSP Package, i.e CDC by-laws, NSP accounting, procurement, project management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, etc. Even though such distant mode of operation may have reduced the

¹⁰⁹ In Logar province for instance, under facilitation of the International Rescue Committee, members of the CDC board included the provincial Governor (chair), District Administrators, former military commanders, Kuchi leaders, religious scholars, tribal elders, government officials from Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health, Irrigation, Planning, Public Services, Refugees and Returnees, Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Women's Affairs, and in Khost the Chamber of Commerce, the Khost University President and the Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs (Maynard, K. 2007)

intensity and quality of facilitation, thus negatively influencing on the overall implementation rate¹¹⁰, it was still considered better than an altogether suspension of activities.

Regrettably, in several areas of NSP operations security situations have deteriorated to the point where NSP facilitating Partners staff was murdered, or taken hostage. Offices were vandalized and looted as well. On such occasions the programme of facilitating Partners operations was suspended in several localities and for varying durations, interrupting the implementation flow and leading to delay in programme activities.

Adequacy of project personnel

As most of the sub-projects were of a high technical complexity, involving either a construction or electric power work, they required qualified and experienced engineering capacity with the Facilitating Partners to assist in the design of good quality proposals by the communities. NSP and MRRD staff also required a special engineering capacity and expertise to be able to review sub-project proposals, and later oversee their implementation. The shortage in quality engineering expertise in Afghanistan during NSP Phase I caused delays in sub-project's design, approvals, and implementation¹¹¹.

¹¹⁰ Limited interaction with the facilitating partners reflected on the design and submission of sub-projects due to the limited ability within the communities to unilaterally produce or implement a technically complex engineering or construction project.

¹¹¹ For instance, under the District School Window, 18 contracts were awarded to construct 8 to 16 classrooms for 58 schools in seven provinces. There were several contractual modifications to increase the quantities due to lack of diligence in the calculation of bills of quantities by MRRD's engineering staff working on the District School Construction and Rehabilitation Window. These contracts could not be completed during the project period and were extended to the second project.

The issue of delays in FPs procurement and payments¹¹², together with the requirements of regular reporting on the implementation process¹¹³, and the need to review an increasing number of sub-project proposals¹¹⁴ shed light on the need for adequate administrative staffing to both the World Bank and MRRD NSP team.

Corruption and misuse

As with any initiative involving turn-around of large amounts of money, especially in the conditions of poverty such as in Afghanistan, the risk of corruption of some form during Project operations was rather high. At the community level, NSP design envisaged safeguards from the possibility of elite capture of benefits by the fact that 1) the establishment of the CDCs would be through a secret ballot and 2) facilitated by an external Facilitating Partner, 3) community sub-projects would be designed and planned in a participatory way, and the fact that 4) the goods attained would be public goods.

Within the project implementation teams, the anti-corruption safeguard was a financial management arrangement under which neither MRRD, nor the Facilitating Partners or implementation monitoring staff would have to deal with cash.

¹¹² The NSP experienced major disbursement problems in the early phase. Delays in the second tranche payments for several communities, which at times was 40% of the overall grant (Nixon 2007) led to some half-finished projects degrading, communities became frustrated, and distrust of external actors – whether the MRRD, NSP or FPs – increased. With the delayed payments, some of the larger NGOs funded their operating costs from own resources till the situation was resolved, but several of the smaller FPs had to suspend operations.

¹¹³ MRRD was required to report on the Project status weekly, monthly, and quarterly. Initially the reporting focused overwhelmingly on the quantitative measures of the number of sub-projects designed, approved, implemented, while the quality of the implementation did not receive deserved attention and detail. Over the time the situation has improved, both in regard to the quality of data and in identification of issues.

¹¹⁴ An increasing number of CDC decided to use their block grants not just for one, but two or three projects. Such turn almost doubled the number of sub-projects that needed to be consulted in the design stage, assessed and approved after submission, unexpectedly causing the need for greater number of staff to be involved in this task.

Such safeguards however, were not able to fully protect from the incidents of corruption, and this is one of the lessons learned through the experience of the NSP. Despite the safeguards, and particularly in provinces with significant presence of Taliban, there were a few reports of the CDCs decision making dominated by former warlords and other influential figures elected into the CDCs. Such figures would profiteer by influencing the choice of projects and contractors in favor of the ones with whom they had connections.¹¹⁵ Corruption episodes such as this with NSP sub-projects in Afghanistan, and the experience of anti-corruption work in the earlier-mentioned KDP Community Development Programme in Indonesia, in the steps of which the NSP has mostly followed, indicate that local community participatory involvement, social audit, and external facilitation are not fully sufficient as an anti-corruption safeguard. Such grassroots measures should be complemented with external, preferably governmental, audits, which were found to be more successful in uncovering corruption.¹¹⁶ The review of the NSP- Phase I implementation process brought to light project implementation factors such as the national government's support, adequate personnel, ex-ante donor coordination and cultural context consideration that played

¹¹⁵ For instance, an IWPR article on NSP projects in Tagab district of Kapisa province 'Afghanistan: Local Reconstruction Effort Goes Awry' (May 2011) describes how the CDCs in this district with significant presence of Taliban are mostly unaccountable bodies, and how the choice of projects and contractors to perform works is dominated by local warlords and other powerful figures who misuse funds.

¹¹⁶ Field research commissioned by the World Bank Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) conducted a randomized, controlled analysis of corruption in 600 KDP road-building projects in East and Central Java during the period of 2002 to 2004. It was established that announcing an increased probability of a government audit and publicizing the audit results at a local community forum was more effective at reducing corruption as compared to improving grassroots social monitoring (Olken 2005).

role in the success this project managed to achieve. It also pointed at the possibility of corruption and insecurity to influence project implementation and results.

In the next case - the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund project – we will see how the choice of implementation arrangements and tactical approaches was different from the ones employed in the first case, resulting in outcomes far more modest than intended.

4. 2 Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) – grand objectives, modest results

While historically a major global producer, Afghanistan's share of world illicit opium production increased from 70 percent in 2000 to 92 percent in 2006, according to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2007a). Beginning in the mid-80s and up to 2007, cultivation of opium poppy and its processing into heroin was the main source of income for the population.

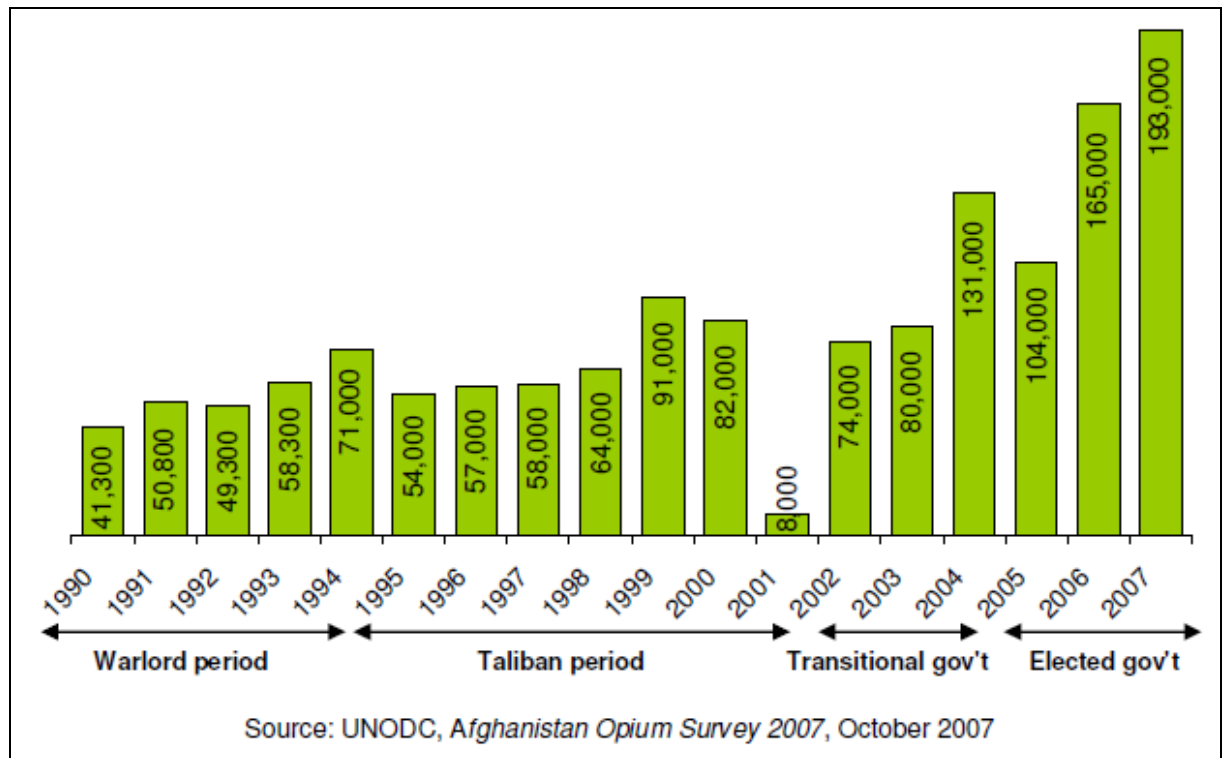
Even with a growing legal gross domestic product (GDP) in post-Taliban period, in 2007 the size of the Afghan drug economy was estimated to be worth more than half (53 percent) of the official economy (UNODC 2007a). In 2007, UNODC also reported an average 34 percent annual growth in opium cultivation since 1990 (Figure 2.3) in 2008 reaching 8,200 metric tons (UNODC 2008a). An increasing number of laboratories located along smuggling routes convert approximately two-thirds of the opium produced in Afghanistan into morphine or heroin before export. Trafficking was following three major routes - the 'northern route' passing through Central Asia, the

‘western route’ through Iran, and the ‘southern route’ passing through Pakistan. In 2008, the export value of opium production was estimated at USD3.4 billion, which constituted one-third of Afghanistan's gross domestic product, and in 2009, at USD 2.8 billion, equivalent to one-quarter of the national GDP. Access to opium trade is closely associated with gaining and maintaining authority and political power at the local level, thus undermining central government’s rule and destabilizing the security in provinces. Most intensive opium poppy cultivation takes part in the southeast parts of Afghanistan, where the Government’s reach and authority is the weakest (UNODC 2008b, UNODC 2009). High cultivation rates are also found to be correlated with high insecurity and insurgency rates, with almost 80 per cent of villages with very poor security conditions engaging in opium cultivation versus only 7 per cent of villages with better security conditions cultivating opium¹¹⁷. The opium economy in Afghanistan was and is a source of corruption and undermines government institutions, especially in the security and justice sectors (UNDP 2007). Opium profits are also used to fund the Taliban insurgency¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ Authors note: there might be some degree of reciprocal causal relationship between high insecurity rates and level of opium production, i.e insecurity and weak government enforcement power might contribute to the greater level of opium cultivation, at the same time wide-spread opium cultivation might trigger insurgency in areas where Taliban-associated militants provide protection for poppy fields.

¹¹⁸ In areas in the south and south-west, the country that in 2008 still remained under control of Taliban, farmers paid a 10% agricultural tax to Taliban, who in turn provided protection for poppy growing fields. The southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar are the country’s most productive opium regions. In 2008, the farm-gate income of farmers from opium reached USD 513 million.

Figure 4.3 - Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan (ha), 1990-2007



Government campaigns, supported by the international community, to eradicate opium production have had limited success, partly due to corruption and violence hindering the eradication process, and partly because of the weak support from provincial authorities within the country, many of whom were former warlords and depend on the drug trade for income. Eradication efforts in 2007 resulted in 19,047 hectares of land freed from opium poppy, which was equal to 10 percent of the total land under opium poppy cultivation in the country. Weak support from the provincial leaders was also due to the fact that forced eradication campaigns often caused significant financial losses to farmers extended households, thus seriously affecting provincial leaders' popularity and legitimacy.

These farmers on the ground, performing the daily work of cultivation and processing opium into heroin, are in fact at the heart of the problem. Farmers with access to infrastructure of irrigation canals and roads, as well as access to the markets, are potentially able to switch to the cultivation of licit crops¹¹⁹. But the farmers who are located further away from provincial capitals and infrastructure hubs are vitally dependent on opium poppy as a source of livelihood. UNODC survey of opium-cultivating farmers, conducted in 2008 showed that the main reason for cultivation was poverty alleviation (92 percent of the farmers surveyed), and the high sale prices for opium being very attractive (66 percent of farmers surveyed) in the backdrop of pervasive poverty (UNODC 2008a). But even more staggeringly, 50 percent of the farmers surveyed, said that they did the cultivation because they received loans for cultivation from major drug dealers¹²⁰, the loans which they could pay off with the drugs produced, keeping the profit¹²¹.

¹¹⁹ Some farmers in such instances actually derived better earnings cultivating licit crops such as okra and vegetables instead of opium poppy.

¹²⁰ Major drug dealers include both pro-government persons of power, most prominently the late Ahmed Wali Karzai - President Karzai's half-brother who was killed in July 2011, as well as independent or pro-Taliban powerful warlords such as for instance Matiullah Khan, the head of a private army in Uruzgan province.

¹²¹ Sometimes, in instances when farmers could not pay off the loan, their families were forced to make deal with the drug dealers offering their young daughters as substitute for payment (PBS Frontline 'Opium Brides' documentary, aired January 2012, online, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/opium-brides/>, accessed February 2012).



Photo 1

Photo 1 shows an area on the right side of the canal which has been newly reclaimed as agricultural land for opium cultivation. Farmers in Hilmand appear to be able to afford the high expenses needed to reclaim land for opium cultivation.



Photo 2

Photo 2 shows agriculture land in Nad Ali district which is well developed with ample irrigation facilities. This area is known for its intensive opium cultivation. The picture shows wheat and poppy in the sprouting stage. Wheat can be distinguished from opium because of its darker green colour.

Creating alternative agricultural income opportunities, and addressing rural poverty and unemployment in general, thus lay at the core of reversing opium production trends, in order to stabilize the country and establish a secure environment for development and peace-building.

In December 2004, the Counter Narcotics Directorate, established under the Afghanistan National Security Council in 2002, was transformed into the Afghan Ministry of Counternarcotics (MCN). Recognizing the threat posed by the illicit drug trade to the success of reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan, counter-narcotics was included as a cross-cutting issue in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The Afghanistan National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) was adopted in 2003 and pursued a comprehensive approach, encompassing the fight against the production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs in Afghanistan. The Strategy envisaged efforts in the areas of law enforcement, legal reform, alternative livelihoods, drug demand reduction and awareness-raising among the general population of Afghanistan on the issue of illicit drugs. A Counter Narcotics Implementation Plan was developed, and the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) was established in May 2005, with the idea of creating a funding pool for counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.

Project objectives and results

The CNTF project objectives were based on perhaps one of the most crucial component of the NDCS - the design and introduction of investment projects to create jobs in the

licit economy in Afghanistan. CNTF terms of reference¹²² envisaged that the fund will be used to assist the implementation of programmes and initiatives recommended by the MCN – led Cabinet Sub-committee on Counter Narcotics and approved by the Government.

CNTF funding for counter-narcotics projects was implemented through two modalities: 1) As an ANDS cross-cutting issue, a counter-narcotics component was to be included in the programmes of relevant line ministries¹²³, for the implementation of which these ministries would then apply and receive funds from CNTF; 2) The Good Performers Initiative (GPI), an incentive-based initiative that would provide a development dividend of USD150,000 to each province that achieves sustained progress towards poppy elimination or remains poppy free. This grant was to be used for agreed priority development projects in that province. GPI projects were to be agreed upon by the Provincial Governor and the Provincial Development Council in conjunction with their development plans. A primary goal for Good Performers Initiative projects was that they were to be delivered in a timely, cost effective and visible manner for the initiative to gain trust and momentum from provincial leaders and general population, encouraging farmers to give up illicit opium production. While the implementation of counter narcotics project components by the line ministries was their own responsibility, for the implementation of GPI projects MCN was to outsource the

¹²² Terms of Reference, Monitoring Agent for the Afghanistan Counter Narcotics Trust Fund. Kabul: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2006a).

¹²³ Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW), Ministry of Hajj and Pilgrimage (MoH) Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD).

implementation of approved projects to private contractors or NGOs acting in coordination with provincial governorates as the Ministry itself did not have the mandate and capacity to implement such (infrastructure and agriculture) projects (UNDP 2005, UNDP 2006a).

Through these two directions of intervention - components of projects of other line ministries, and the GPI - the overall intended outcome of CNTF project was a substantive reduction in the illicit drugs industry. It was also envisaged that along this process, relevant counter narcotics institutions at national and provincial level would be strengthened, legal frameworks promoted, and drug demand reduction activities expanded. With the original implementation period set at 42 months, an indicative CNTF fund was to amount to USD900 million and a 3 % General Management Support fee to the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan. In 2007, the actual original commitments to the Fund totaled USD82 million (Figure 4.4).

A multi-donor fund of 14 donors, CNTF received major contributions from UK, EC and from the US with earmarked contribution for the GPI. United Nations Development Programme also contributed in-kind, by supporting CNTF Directorate staff salary and operational costs.

Figure 4.4 – CNTF Financial Statement of donor contributions as of July 2007

Table 3.1 CNTF Financial Statement (July 31, 2007) (US\$)						
Donor	Commitment	Receipts				Total Advances¹⁰
		2005	2006	2007	Total	
Australia	1,526,718	1,526,718	-	-	1,526,718	1,482,250
Canada	1,052,632	-	1,052,632	-	1,052,632	-
Cyprus	10,000	-	10,000	-	10,000	-
EC	17,647,059	14,117,647	-	-	14,117,647	7,333,103
Estonia	50,000	-	50,000	-	50,000	48,544
Italy	1,317,523	-	1,317,523	-	1,317,523	-
Japan	5,000,000	-	5,000,000	-	5,000,000	-
New Zealand	352,609	352,609	-	-	352,609	342,339
Poland	100,000	-	100,000	-	100,000	-
Spain	336,022	-	-	336,022	336,022	-
Sweden	2,000,000	-	-	2,000,000	2,000,000	-
UK	44,347,826	-	15,652,173	-	15,652,173	-
UNDP	1,112,721	300,000	312,721	500,000	1,112,721	-
USA	8,000,000	-	-	-	-	-
Total	82,853,109	16,296,974	23,495,049	2,836,022	42,628,045	9,206,236

Source: UNDP Financial Statements as of July 31, 2007

During the first two years since the project was launched, the results achieved were rather weak. The 2007 evaluation of the first phase of the project, commissioned by the CNTF management board¹²⁴, reported that as of August 2007, 273 CNTF projects¹²⁵ have been formulated with only 30 approved for funding, representing ‘a failure rate of 90 percent’ (Middlebrook et al. 2007). Anticipated funding requirement for these 30 projects totaled to approximately USD29 million, yet by August 2007, almost two years after the fund was established, only around USD2,5 million (less than 10%) was disbursed. Several of the thematic pillars¹²⁶ had yet to incur expenditures. A year later, by June 2008, expenditures had increased to USD11,45 (UNDP 2008b).

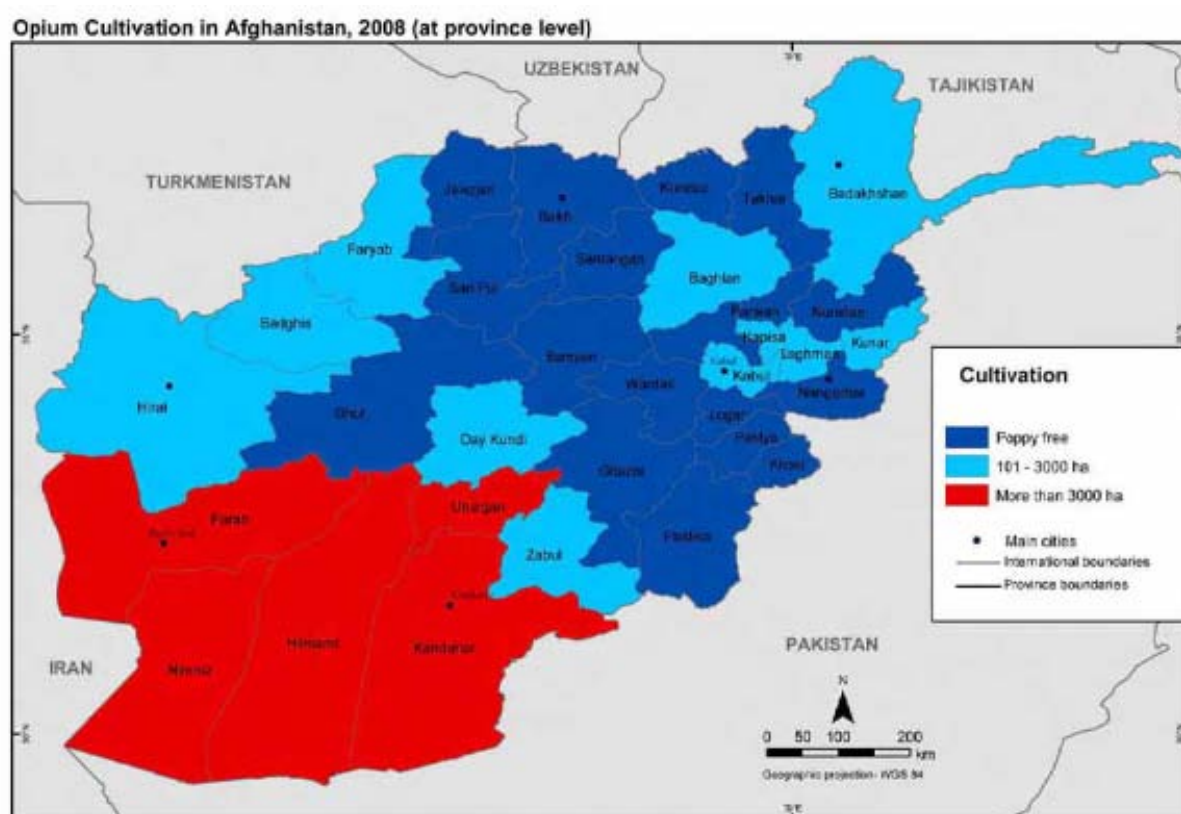
¹²⁴ Management Board co-chaired by Minister of Counter Narcotics and UNDP. Members include MCN, MoF, UNDP, ADB, UK as a leading nation in counter narcotics), EC, and the UN (UNAMA, UNDP and UNODC).

¹²⁵ For the purpose of this paper, CNTF projects are counter-narcotics components within the programmes of line ministries.

¹²⁶ The Trust Fund builds upon the NDCS eight pillars for intervention - 1. Alternative Livelihoods, 2. Building Institutions, 3. Public Awareness, 4. Law Enforcement, 5. Criminal Justice, 6. Eradication, 7. Drug Demand Reduction and Treatment of Drug Addicts, 8. International and Regional Co-operation.

As for the Good Performers Initiative component, in 2006, there were six poppy-free provinces; in 2007, 13; and in 2008, 18 (Figure 4.5). Initiatives to support the farmers and their families, and rural communities at large, were needed to build up on the achievements in opium free provinces and to expand the opium-free agricultural pattern to other provinces. USD18,6 million has been allocated to 17 provinces, out of which USD15 million was in ongoing projects at different stages of implementation by mid 2008. Thus, as of June 2008, out of USD42,6 million advanced by the donors by July 2007, the project managed to utilize only about USD26,5 million.

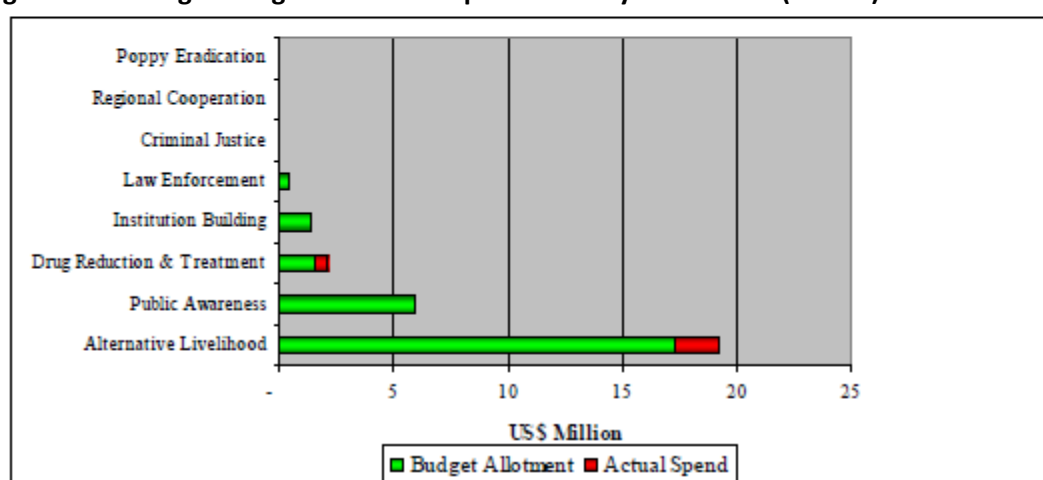
Figure 4.5



Source: UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008

CNTF project progress and the timely achievement of expected project milestones were hindered mainly due to significant delays in sub-projects development and slow disbursement procedures. The slow spending rates were also a consequence of poor absorption capacities within the line ministries to design and implement projects, and expend funds (Figure 4.6), ultimately leading to a low level of national counterparts' support to the project.

Figure 4.6 – Budgeted Against Actual Expenditures by NDCS Pillar (in USD)



Source: Review of the Afghanistan Counter Narcotics Trust Fund, Middlebrook et al. 2007

The implications of such delays and low-scale performance for the donors was that donors were not meeting their projected expenditure targets, as funds were committed for certain time-frames¹²⁷. As a consequence, some donors became reluctant to commit further funds to the CNTF unless there was a significant turnaround in disbursements. During late 2007 and early 2008 however, the implementation rates did not see credible

¹²⁷ For instance Japan's contribution was provided for a 3-month disbursement forecast for drought response, and was not utilized for at least 15 months after the contribution was made. Similarly, EC funds were not expended within the expected usual 12 month time frame.

improvement (UNDP 2008a, UNDP 2008b). For instance, a major expected output of CNTF project was an 'increased access to sustainable licit livelihoods opportunities for all citizens in every province of Afghanistan'. In reality however, a total of 33 projects were approved for implementation by the end of 2008. Of this total, 21 were completed, 4 were cancelled, and 8 were ongoing.

Another main output expected under CNTF was that 'strong, well resourced, staffed and coordinated Afghan Government counter narcotics institutions in Kabul and at provincial level' would be 'leading an international effort to eliminate poppy cultivation in Afghanistan' (UNDP 2005, UNDP 2009b). In pursuit of this output, a Capacity Development project was launched as a main component of the CNTF for the Government of Afghanistan. It aimed to improve the capacity of the national line ministries in developing and implementing counter narcotics projects.

However, by the end of 2008 the project did not go further than conducting a capacity needs assessment within twelve line ministries, evaluating these ministries understanding of the role and function of the CNTF and MCN, and assessing the capacities within these ministries as to the writing, developing and managing counter narcotics projects. A similar needs assessment on the skills available for project cycles management was conducted for CNTF team at the MCN.

As a result of such poor record of performance and failure to get the project implementation and fund utilization up to the speed, finally in August 2008 CNTF

management board decided to gradually terminate the CNTF project, focusing the remaining project lifetime on the completion of ongoing projects (UNDP 2009c).

Thus, by the time the abovementioned needs assessment results were in and the next stage of actual training activities was supposed to begin, they could not be undertaken because the project was focused on closing down. Only a one-day capacity building workshop, organized in September 2009, took place, in which 39 CNTF and MCN staff received training on report writing and monitoring and evaluation.

For the purpose of just completing eight ongoing projects, CNTF project was extended three times, first for six months and until June 30, 2009, then until 31 December 2009, and finally until the end of 2010. CNTF Management Board demanded that UNDP finalizes its commitment as fund's administrator until project's full closure (UNDP 2009a, UNDP 2009c). Against the background of burgeoning poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, CNTF project lost two key opportunities – money and time.

Implementation process and lessons learned

Analyzing CNTF administrative set up and implementation process in comparison with the one of NSP brings to light a few weak links in the programming of CNTF and some clear lessons. It is hard to say which of these shortcomings was the most undermining, but in combination they destined the project to inevitable failure.

The CNTF project concept was similar to the one of the NSP, with the idea of funding and implementing sub-projects that would address local needs in provinces

while at the same time create employment opportunities for local population. Albeit these similarities and the existence of key elements of an effective counter narcotics strategy¹²⁸ in place, the devil indeed turned out to be in details.

On the technical level, unlike with NSP, where the design and implementation of hundreds of provincial sub-projects in water, power, transport, and irrigation infrastructure was facilitated by large-scale external assistance, under CNTF, line ministries were expected to develop their counter narcotics sub-projects with assistance from MCN Project Development unit which was poorly equipped for the task. Given the scale of the intended intervention, and the novelty of the concept of project design and management, let alone the novelty of alternative livelihoods as a mean of counter narcotics, relying solely on the CNTF national team at MCN and MCN Project Development unit was overly optimistic, if not unreasonable. Even if costly, involvement of facilitating partners as with NSP would have been fully justified for a programme with an intended budget of USD900 million, both in terms of getting the Trust Fund up and running, and in terms of providing intended capacity building and coaching along the way.

Weak capacity and resulting low level of national government's support

The line ministries that were expected to develop counter narcotics projects often could not assign a staff member responsible solely for counter narcotics. Usually it would be a 'focal point' staff, who would be dealing with counter narcotics among many other

¹²⁸ i.e. NDCS and corresponding counter narcotics implementation plan, as well as relevant funding and monitoring frameworks.

issues, and who usually had no counter narcotics expertise. Such poor capacity at the line ministries, coupled with inadequate support provided by the MCN/CNTF Project Development Unit due to the same weak capacity, lead to the situation when most projects submitted to CNTF for funding were little more than project concepts without any detailed implementation planning which considered costs, risks, feasibility, expected economic rate of return, sustainability, etc¹²⁹.

Often, projects that were already approved by the Management Board still required additional design and technical work before initiating procurement procedures. Significant delays between the date of approval and the date expenditures were actually incurred were mainly caused by such poor quality project designs¹³⁰. For instance, the earlier mentioned Needs Assessment Project was approved by the Management Board in August 2006, but could not begin implementing and disbursing funds a year after its approval, due to the disagreement among management Board members on the details of the terms of reference of the project.

As a result, the CNTF Directorate¹³¹ established within the MCN and dedicated to the administration of the Trust Fund, tried to fill in this gap and develop project ideas and draft project proposals directly, supply driving sub-projects for funding on behalf of the line ministries. A number of such projects did receive support through CNTF,

¹²⁹ The Procedural Guidelines also required that the application by line ministries was to be completed in English. This was not always a straightforward task at a national line ministry, particularly at the provincial level, and undermined ownership by provincial line ministries.

¹³⁰ In 2006, a total of 121 were submitted to the MB, of which 21 were approved, for an approval rating of 17.4%. The majority of CN project rejected were due to poor design and proposal quality as opposed to the CN relevance of the project (Middlebrook et al 2007).

¹³¹ CNTF Directorate of 12 mostly national staff members, officially reported to the Minister of MCN, while its personnel was contracted and paid by UNDP.

although such projects were poorly contextualized in terms of their relevance and timing for a given district or province, and their ownership by the beneficiaries and the consequent sustainability was rather questionable (Middlebrook et al. 2007).

The issue of weak capacity and the need for good facilitation and coaching also came up in regard to line ministries unassisted handling of the procurement function under CNTF. As a programme executed through the national government institutions, with funds coming through treasury and the national budget, all CNTF projects followed a bidding process as per the national Procurement Law. In practice this meant that once a line ministry submitted and got approval of work and procurement plans for the project, this line ministry would initiate the procurement process of bidding and selection of goods and services for the project, recruit necessary project staff, and conduct site visits. Line ministries performing this function without assistance created substantial delays in selection and disbursement of funds, substantially delaying the initiation of actual project implementation¹³².

The disbursement of funds itself was performed through a complicated chain of administrative procedures required under the national execution modality: once the proposed project documentation was received from a line ministry, memorandum of understanding was compiled between the ministry and the MCN. The MCN would then prepare and sign a Certificate of Approval, and forward it to UNDP. UNDP upon the

¹³² In order to address this situation and reduce the long procurement cycle, the MoF in 2007 allowed using Fast Track procurement process of GPI projects for CNTF projects, reducing the procurement period to 28 days. Under such arrangement, MCN could bypass the line ministries' central offices and work directly with these ministries' Provincial Directorates (PDs).

receipt of the Certificate of Approval from the MCN, produced a Letter of Agreement (LoA) between UNDP and the MoF, authorizing the funding of the approved project. The MoF then would draft the Disbursement Protocol, creating a fund code and transferring funds to the Ministry.

Poor project leadership and lack of initiative

The fact that the set-up of the project in its current form was not working well in producing the crucial component of project implementation – the counter narcotics sub-projects to be funded – was becoming obvious by the end of the first year since the launch of CNTF (UNDP 2006b), and was hard not to notice in the second year (UNDP 2008b). In a situation like this, decisive measures to address such a weak link in project design were necessary from the project management side. However, unlike the NSP Operational Manual¹³³ which provided for clear leadership, procedural arrangements, and reporting lines, CNTF's Procedural Guideline on project leadership and strategy compliance were complex and convoluted.

Similarly to the administering role of the World Bank for the NSP, UNDP was appointed Trust Fund administrator for CNTF, with the terms of reference designating the Country Director of UNDP Afghanistan as the Trust Fund manager¹³⁴. The Ministry

¹³³ NSP operational manual was developed through consultations among MRRD, Facilitating Partners, and Donors, with the advice from the World Bank.

¹³⁴ The World Bank was reportedly asked to administer the CNTF but declined as the Bank's regulations do not envisage World Bank involvement in such a programme.

of Finance of Afghanistan (MoF) was responsible for the financial management of the Trust Fund¹³⁵.

The confusion began with the guidelines envisaging two project management bodies, with mostly overlapping functions and similar composition, but neither of which had a clear-line leadership. The CNTF *Management Board* was co-chaired by the Minister of Counter Narcotics and UNDP Country Director, and comprised MCN, MoF, UNDP, ADB, UK (as a leading nation in counter narcotics), EC, and the UN (UNAMA, UNDP and UNODC). The Management Board was responsible for governing the Trust Fund and was expected to meet each month. The Board was also tasked with approving eligible projects for funding, as well as meeting UNDP funding requirements, among other things ‘ensuring that the project proposals comply with sound project design principles and are consistent with the policies and guidelines of the NDCS’. But the revolving co-chair arrangement between MCN and UNDP undermined the clarity as to responsibility and accountability for project progress (or the lack of such).

In addition to the Management Board, a *Steering Committee*, again, co-chaired by the Minister of Counter Narcotics and UNDP Country Director, and comprising major donors to the Trust Fund, UNDP, MCN, and MoF, was tasked with providing strategic oversight and policy guidance on counter narcotics to the Management Board, and ‘ensure effective, efficient and transparent implementation of the UNDP

¹³⁵ Disbursements from the UNDP Trust fund account held in New York are disbursed to the Treasury Department of the Ministry of Finance, with advance payments made at the request of the MoF to Da Afghanistan Bank covering forecast quarterly expenditure requirement. MoF is responsible for guaranteeing that CNTF funded projects are reflected within the core budget, both through the annual budget process and mid-year review.

Administration Support’¹³⁶. As with the Management Board, there was no definite responsibility put on either UNDP or MCN to take charge of difficult situations, take decisions and act upon them. The two bodies thus failed to fulfill their task of steering the project implementation process effectively.

Still, realizing the capacity constraints at the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, and Ministry’s generally adjunct status¹³⁷ to assert its policy and coordinating function, the role of UNDP as administrator of the Trust Fund was essential in the delivery of the Fund in a more effective way. Management and decision making process was heavily dependent on the capacity and leadership responsibility of UNDP, which it did not fulfill¹³⁸. ‘The UNDP management role could have been stronger and effectiveness could have been improved’, stated UNDP’s own evaluation report¹³⁹.

CNTF Procedural Guidelines also did not give a practical set-up and detail for a provincial based programme approach to be followed in the design, planning and implementation of the investment programmes and associated sub-projects, despite CNTF Project Document highlighting the need for province-wide approach. National Drug Control Strategy’s counter narcotics implementation plans, intended to guide the development of such provincial programmes, were never used. Similarly, a list of

¹³⁶ As of May 31, 2007 has met only three times.

¹³⁷ The Ministry of Counter Narcotics is just another line ministry within the government structure, and had no political authority over other line ministries in order for its policy and coordination efforts to be respected and implemented by other ministries. The status of counter-narcotics as a cross-cutting issue in ANDS became a two-edge sword – it implied a broad introduction of the CN issue in the work of all relevant sectors, but such broad introduction was overwhelming and cumbersome for MCN to enforce and achieve practical tangible results.

¹³⁸ Perhaps in an attempt to honor a too ambitious decision to implement a newly established Trust fund through a National Execution Modality (NEX), giving the lead role to the MCN in setting up priorities, resource allocation, project implementation, monitoring and supervision.

¹³⁹ UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme Evaluation 2009 (UNDP 2009a). Kabul, United Nations Development Programme.

counter narcotics project indicators developed within the National Drug Control Strategy was not consulted.

Inadequate monitoring and reporting arrangements

As opposed to NSP, where from the start, constant monitoring and reporting on implementation and financial matters was conducted by the MRRD NSP team with support from an oversight consultant, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of CNTF was assigned with several stakeholders, including line ministries, MCN, Auditor General, UNDP. As a result, a regular and consistent monitoring of counter narcotics outcomes was not being undertaken and impacts were not documented. As for the financial monitoring and reporting, following several instances of poor funds management¹⁴⁰, a Monitoring Agent was engaged later in the process, focusing on accounting records, reports from MoF, monthly financial reports, visiting project sites.

Conclusion

Recognizing the whole host of challenges with CNTF implementation, in October 2007 the Management Board decided to move from the project-by-project approach and reliance on line ministries, to a province-based comprehensive approach. Counter narcotics plans and initiatives were to be designed by Provincial Governors in consultation with provincial stakeholders, the MCN and the line ministries, also involving traditional local institutions and leaders. Such approach was thought to

¹⁴⁰ A limited scope audit by the Auditor General from the Control and Audit Office of Afghanistan conducted for 2006, noted instances of poor cash management of advances, lack of fixed assets register, and human error (Middlebrook et al. 2007).

improve the ownership of counter narcotics activities by provincial authorities, while CNTF's role would be reduced to a funding mechanism. A special attention was also to be paid to the capacity of line ministries in developing and running a counternarcotics component. The result of such late adjustments however will remain mostly unknown, as less than a year later, the overall donor dissatisfaction with the national execution (NEX) implementation modality of CNTF resulted in a decision to close the Trust Fund.

The case of the CNTF project implementation represents a stark example of how the weak national capacity leads to poor support from national counterparts to project objectives. Coupled with poor leadership on the international project implementation side, and inadequate monitoring and reporting arrangements, these factors destined the project to imminent failure.

In contrast, the following example of the Animal Health and Development Programme, illustrates how a strong leadership on the international project implementation side, together with cooperative and supportive national counterparts can salvage a project that was initially heading towards failure.

4.3 Animal Health Development Programme in Afghanistan – good effort with mixed results

A longstanding tradition of reliance on animals and animal products in Afghanistan makes animal health and welfare services particularly important to household food security, and to the national economy in general. In this context, and given a landlocked

geographical location of Afghanistan with intensive cross-border trade with its six neighboring countries, continuous monitoring and controlling of animal diseases is necessary to identify and curb the spread of new diseases and disease strains.

Introduced during Soviet presence in the country¹⁴¹, for many years the practice of animal health and welfare service in Afghanistan was a government-run service. It provided treatment services and regular free vaccination campaigns through a network of around 120 veterinary clinics in provinces and districts around the country. Following the withdrawal of the soviet troops and the fall of Kabul to Taliban in 1992, and as a result of ongoing civil insecurity, the attention and resources dedicated to sustaining and developing animal health and welfare services declined considerably. Trying to fill in the gap, international organizations and NGOs became involved in animal health support sector, providing skills and equipment support for more than twenty years now¹⁴² (WB 2006b).

From 1988 and until 1997, over 400 para-veterinarians were trained and deployed in Veterinary Field Units (VFU) in 34 provinces of Afghanistan, forming a network of private and independent Animal Health Service Providers (AHSP). Often, due to the lack of cadre available to work, particularly in remote or insecure areas, local

¹⁴¹ A nine-year conflict during 1979 – 1989, with Soviet Union military presence in the country, supporting the Marxist-Leninist government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, against the Afghan Mujahideen guerrilla, unofficially supported military and financially mainly by the United States and Saudi Arabia.

¹⁴² The first para-veterinary training was initiated in 1986 by the German Afghan Foundation (GAF). In the same year the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)' survey of agricultural capacity reported that 'civil unrest has led to severely depleted livestock numbers as a result of disease and the breakdown of veterinary services'. Based on this findings, in 1988, the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA) starts providing veterinary assistance and training, and adopts a strategy of training and supporting para-veterinarians and vaccinators.

people were selected by their communities and given six months of practical training to become para-veterinarians. These para-veterinarians form the majority of AHSPs in Afghanistan today. In addition to these private para-veterinarians, animal health services are also provided by recovering government providers at the central and provincial level, as well as by the NGOs and UN agencies who mainly work through private para-veterinarians. The government also runs a Government Animal Vaccine Production Laboratory (AVPL), and the Faculties of Veterinary Science at Universities in Kabul, Jalalabad and Herat (Landell Mills 2006, 2007b).

To support further development of the animal health and welfare services in Afghanistan, in 2006 the European Delegation in Afghanistan launched the Animal Health Development Programme (AHDP). A four year programme with a budget of €4,651,004 was financed by the European Commission and implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) of Afghanistan as the executing agency.

Project objectives and results

The overall goal of the project was to improve living conditions for the rural population by assisting the revival of the animal production sector.

The challenges the sector faced ranged from incomplete understanding of the disease situation in the country, and farmers not having much understanding and trust in

professional veterinary services, to the fact that the veterinary medicine was not regarded highly as a profession.

Pursuing the overall goal, and taking the above challenges into consideration, the project aimed at achieving four main results:

1. Establishing a restructured Animal Health and Production Department, operating at national, regional and provincial levels and collaborating with private sector animal health service providers at district and village levels;
2. Support and training to the Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and its provincial offices so that its staff is able to perform various diagnostic services for the public services' operations and on request from private operators¹⁴³;
3. Establishing a strong epidemic surveillance network for early detection, diagnosis and control of diseases, including border surveillance;
4. Revision of the statute of the Vaccine Production Laboratory to make it operate fully on a commercial basis to satisfy local demand, while the Central Laboratory is performing quality assurance tests for the locally produced vaccines.

Issues such as the important role of women in animal husbandry and health, environmental considerations, and the animal welfare, particularly in care and use of laboratory animals were to be given special attention in the process of pursuing these objectives.

¹⁴³ This would also allow for better understanding of the epidemiology of animal diseases in Afghanistan and consequent formulation of detailed policies and strategies for their control.

Review of the achievements for the first phase of the project showed that while there were good achievements on certain project components, there was no tangible progress on others.

Project components such as technical and logistic support for the Veterinary Field Units and support and training for vaccine laboratories were producing the outputs and outcomes as scheduled (Landell Mills 2008a). Positive indicators began to arrive on the increase in the number of diagnosed cases as well as a growing number of livestock owners beginning to trust and willing to pay for private para-veterinarian services.

In the meantime, the process of implementation of project objectives 1 and 4, which implied a revision of the status of the governmental Animal Health and Production Department and the Vaccine Production Laboratory, seriously stagnated.

Additionally, substantial delay in the implementation of the technical training curriculum was obvious, and required the revision of initially set training targets. (Landell Mills 2007a, 2008b)

Implementation process and lessons learned

Animal health sector policies and strategies of the MAIL are based on three key government documents. The Agriculture Master Plan¹⁴⁴, contains the animal health sector policy and necessary technical components. The Agriculture Strategy Paper under

¹⁴⁴ Completed in November 2005

the Afghanistan National Development Strategy¹⁴⁵ organizes animal health policy and technical components in accordance with the overall goals of the agricultural sector, and at the national level. And finally, the Implementation and Investment Plan provides detailed actions and resource allocation in its livestock chapter¹⁴⁶.

In the administration and substantive implementation of the project, the Afghan MAIL was assisted by a team of long, medium and short-term experts working under a service contract awarded to Landell Mills Ltd., a UK – based firm specializing on animal health and production, in association with Agri-Livestock Consultants Limited, and the Animal Sciences Group at University of Wageningen, the Netherlands. From the EC side, the project was supervised by a Project Officer. Such combination and coordination of skills undertaken and reflected in the project document provided for a full set of skills required for the implementation of the various components of the project, and availability of clear leadership and reporting arrangements (Landell Mills 2006).

Additionally, three international NGOs – Mercy Corps, MADERA (France), and DCA (the Netherlands) were also engaged to facilitate the work on particular project objectives on provincial and district level, working directly with local government animal health centers and private para-veterinarians.

All current livestock sector aid projects, including this, were formulated within the Agricultural Master Plan through a Memorandum of Understanding on Animal Health Programmes in Afghanistan, agreed to by the MAIL. The first and main objective

¹⁴⁵ Submitted in June 2007

¹⁴⁶ Latest version released in November 2007

identified under the Memorandum is strengthening the delivery of Animal Health and Production services through *private* sector. Transition to private service provision requires revising legislation and institutional framework. The governmental animal health providers and the governmental animal vaccine production laboratory were to be privatized, while the Animal Health and Production Department of the MAIL would seize to provide services and perform policy, contracting, coordination and oversight function (FAO 2009, WB 2006b).

In the process however, it became clear that many officials at MAIL were not familiar or did not understand the details of the ANDS, the Agricultural Master Plan and related Memorandum, and consequently did not support the ideas and plans reflected in these documents. As a result, the ownership of these basis documents within MAIL was rather questionable.

The major issue for the programme implementation stemmed from this situation. Many government staff in MAIL felt that privatization is a foreign, unsuitable concept that is being imposed on Afghanistan. Many managerial staff members in the ministry were used to their experience of centralized, government-run services as practiced during the Soviet presence. The idea that government services should be primarily at the level of regulation, inspection, policy and planning, information and guidance, was rather new. Managers did not understand, or refused to accept the arguments given in support of private model, believing that privatization would create duplication,

undermine the authority of their governmental body, and negatively affect vested interests of the Ministry (Landell Mills 2007b, 2008a, 2008b).

Consequently, the privatization of selected government veterinarians, and contracting of private sector providers, which was clearly stipulated in the Agriculture Master Plan, met vehement resistance from key MAIL management staff as well as the government veterinarians themselves.

Rejection of project objectives by national counterparts

The planned project component on the revision of existing or drafting of new legislation and institutional framework was also substantially undermined. The attempts of the project implementation team to establish a Legal Framework Working Group did not go far due to the ‘continued reluctance of the Director General of the Animal Health and Production Directorate at the MAIL (GD AHP) to engage in any discussion’ on this subject.

The participation and support for the group from other senior staff of the Directorate was also insufficient for the group to function as a consultation body. None of the invited AHP personnel attended meetings with the project management team and NGO partners. The meetings went ahead with NGO and other donor funded projects.

The lack of support for the privatization process at a provincial level lead to almost unanimous rejection of the option of privatization by Provincial Government Veterinary Officers at a workshop organized under the project in December 2007

(Landell Mills 2008a). Instead, the project implementation team, and other donors working in this area, continued to receive requests and proposals from MAIL and Provincial Government Veterinary Departments on the construction of new government veterinary clinics, and asking support for continuing centrally organized vaccination campaigns across the country.

As with animal health services providers, the government was not ready and willing to turn the national Animal Vaccine Production Laboratory (AVPL) into a private commercial enterprise either.

The unwillingness of the senior staff of the Directorate to participate in the drafting the modalities for introducing a contracting scheme began impacting negatively on other three major projects funded by the World Bank (Avian Influenza Project, and Horticulture and Livestock Productivity Project¹⁴⁷) and USAID (FAO managed Trans-Boundary regional Avian Influenza Project), all of which had contracting private sector providers as a project component (Landell Mills 2007a, WB 2006b).

Strong project leadership and improved national government's support

Despite continuous difficulties with the national counterparts, through patient yet persistent efforts of the project implementation team leader, and with the support from lower-level staff within the Ministry, revised institutional framework and

¹⁴⁷ The World Bank Horticulture and Livestock Project (HLP) had a component to privatize 120 government animal health service providers, along with providing substantial training component. The implementation of this project was also seriously delayed due to fierce resistance from the government veterinarians on the list for privatization.

organizational charts were drafted in order to accompany proposed budgets. A draft proposed new legislation (Animal Health and Veterinary Public Health Act) was also prepared and submitted to the Director General, but again, received no response. Two years into project implementation, with no credible progress on major project objectives, the project was facing serious problems and would have had to be revised. Luckily, with the retirement of the Director General and the appointment of a new Acting Director General in the Directorate of Animal Health and Production the situation has changed. Project implementation team was finally able to hold a series of meetings with senior management in the Directorate. These meetings allowed the project team to explain the rationale behind the proposed changes in the structure of the Directorate and its core functions. Most importantly, the meetings helped to relieve the fears of senior government officials regarding the proposed private contracting of services and perceived threat of job losses. A preliminary consensus was achieved, with the management of the Division supporting the proposed changes, and being enthusiastic about developing the capacity at the Division to perform proposed new functions.

Since then, the project made considerable progress in taking forward the processes of restructuring and reform within the General Directorate of Animal Health and Production. A draft revised structure for the Directorate, together with terms of reference for each of the proposed new Divisions and new positions within the Division were discussed and put forward.

Similarly, the process of establishing a national disease surveillance network through private contracting has progressed, with senior management of the Directorate agreeing to the proposed engagement of private sector service providers in a partnership for disease surveillance, reporting, outbreak investigation and control.

Coordination with donors and NGOs

Existing cooperation and coordination with other projects working in the livestock sector became more concrete and fruitful with this positive shift within the Division management. Working closely with the World Bank, USAID, and FAO (which all had shared interest in finalizing the proposed private contracting scheme for disease surveillance and veterinary services privatization), stakeholders were finally able to jointly work on draft revised legislation, sharing and receiving feedback from the national counterparts.

Contrary to earlier mistrust and competition with NGOs, a monthly GD AHP/NGO Coordination Meeting was now arranged, allowing identifying other donors funding small projects in the animal health sector. Some of these projects were implemented under the auspices of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and outside the knowledge of MAIL, and sometimes in conflict with MAIL policy. Through such coordination mechanism these other projects were being gradually identified, contacted and drawn into the GD AHP network, improving

coordination among donors, provincial government veterinary services, and NGOs (Landell Mills 2009).

Involving and relying on NGOs to support national counterpart agency

Engaging and supporting local NGOs as implementation partners proved to be a successful strategy choice for the project. Over the last two decades, NGOs have been innovators in the animal health field, and in the absence of policy and framework documentation, continued to push ahead. Some NGOs now had basic laboratory diagnostic capacity (based primarily on microscopy), and some have even entered into local disease control programmes such as purchase and slaughter campaigns for focal eradication of certain animal diseases.

With their practical experience at hand, NGOs were an important policy interlocutor, and began actively participating in the newly created Coordination Meetings among MAIL Directorate, project implementation team, and NGOs. Such a new engagement and interaction was of particular importance for the success of envisaged future partnership between MAIL and private para-veterinarian NGOs. Because, while on a day-to-day basis the interaction between government veterinarian services and NGOs was collaborative, in general both sides were competitive and distrustful of each other.

The value added by NGOs was that, with their presence on the ground, NGOs could test new approaches and obtain a deeper knowledge of the related social impact

than was made possible for projects implemented just through the Ministry. NGOs were also better positioned to more actively engage women under the project, expand project activities into new, sometimes remote and insecure districts, as well as deliver small awareness rising initiatives in villages on animal diseases and vaccination campaigns. Last but not least, NGOs had better access locally to advocate the importance of animal health sector in the agricultural system, encouraging young population for careers in animal health sector and thus lay grounds for better capacity within the sector in the future.

The current capacity development component of the project was largely on track during the Phase I of the project. Training of diagnostic laboratory technologists progressed well. Nine laboratory technologists have completed almost 3 years of continuous training and were ready to begin studying the use of advanced bacteriological identification techniques. English language and computer skills training at regional veterinary offices was well on track, covering most of the veterinary field units. Technical assistance and training provided under the project allowed successful extension of veterinary diagnostic laboratory services to the regions and selected provinces.

The two factors that interfered with the implementation of the capacity building component of the project were the initial low capacity of the staff covered by training,

and the cultural perspective and low perception of the veterinary profession in Afghanistan¹⁴⁸.

For instance, three para-veterinarians were provided with a 3 month course in advanced English language to enable them to study at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in London in a 1-year Master of Science course in Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics. However, none of the three candidates did not pass the IELTS language test required for entry to the College. The initiative was repeated the following year with new two candidates, the outcome for which is to be seen in the Phase II of the project (Landell Mills 2009).

The experience of the AHDP project demonstrates how the understanding and acceptance by the national government and counterpart agency of new concepts and ideas foreign to local conditions is important in the smooth implementation of projects. By extension, complications with understanding and accepting new concepts and principles sheds light onto the issue of personalities and cultural differences, particularly obvious when it comes to personalities and cultural and traditional preferences of people of authority. As with the previous two cases reviewed, this case also illustrated the crucial importance of good project management leadership, which despite difficulties in engaging the national counterpart in one area of project objectives, continued to

¹⁴⁸ The veterinary profession has low status and pay in Afghanistan, not many young people aspire to become veterinarians. Such perception of the profession explains that the Veterinary Faculty at Kabul University usually receives the students who perform poorly in the qualifying exams. These students are thus placed with the department by chance, and are not very interested in the veterinary profession. As the pay is particularly low for veterinary positions in rural areas, very few graduates are willing to accept positions in remote rural locations.

systematically pursue activities on other project objectives, while actively engaging with other important international donors working on the issue of animal health and production in Afghanistan.

As with introduction of new concept of privatization, the capacity building experience of the project demonstrates that different stakeholders, particularly national counterparts, start at very different positions. The overall experience of the project illustrates how change takes place through different stages, of improving understanding and perceptions on the issue, clarification of concerns and needs, and most importantly by engaging the national counterparts in change management process, even if at a slow pace. It takes time before an agreement can be reached on the implementation strategies, organizational set up, and courses of action. Although this makes programmes more expensive and less cost effective, such an approach gives a chance to avoid fundamental problems such as lack of national ownership of policy and of related concrete aid initiatives.

Overall, a review of these three project implementation cases demonstrates how the choice of the operational and tactical approaches in project implementation can positively or negatively influence the success of implementation, causing similar projects to achieve different levels of success in attaining objectives. These cases vividly point at the value of strong project leadership, the acceptance and support received from national counterparts, as well as of capacity building and coaching. The importance of monitoring and evaluation, adequate staffing, donor coordination, security constraints

and arrangements to overcome such, and the role of the NGOs in project implementation is also underscored.

In each of the three illustrative cases, these factors played out in a different combination and to a different degree, but which of these factors matter the most? In order to address this question on factors that are likely to be most important across project types, a more rigorous, quantitative assessment of these implementation factors is required, that would go beyond these case studies, as well as assess what other possible determinants of reconstruction and development project implementation success exist. I pursue such quantitative assessment in the following chapters, first by developing an explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development, and then posing a set of testable hypotheses rooted in the relevant literature.

CHAPTER V

Parameters, Modeling, and Methodology

The reviewed literature on project effectiveness helped me to identify three research questions: 1) How important is the national government's support for project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development? 2) What role does donor coordination play for project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development? and 3) What other factors explain project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development?

This chapter is dedicated to developing an explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development, designing a set of testable hypotheses that will allow examining the research questions this study poses. In this chapter I also outline the methodology that I used to test these hypotheses. In the next step, I give a detailed explanation of the data collection process and its results.

5.1 Definitions

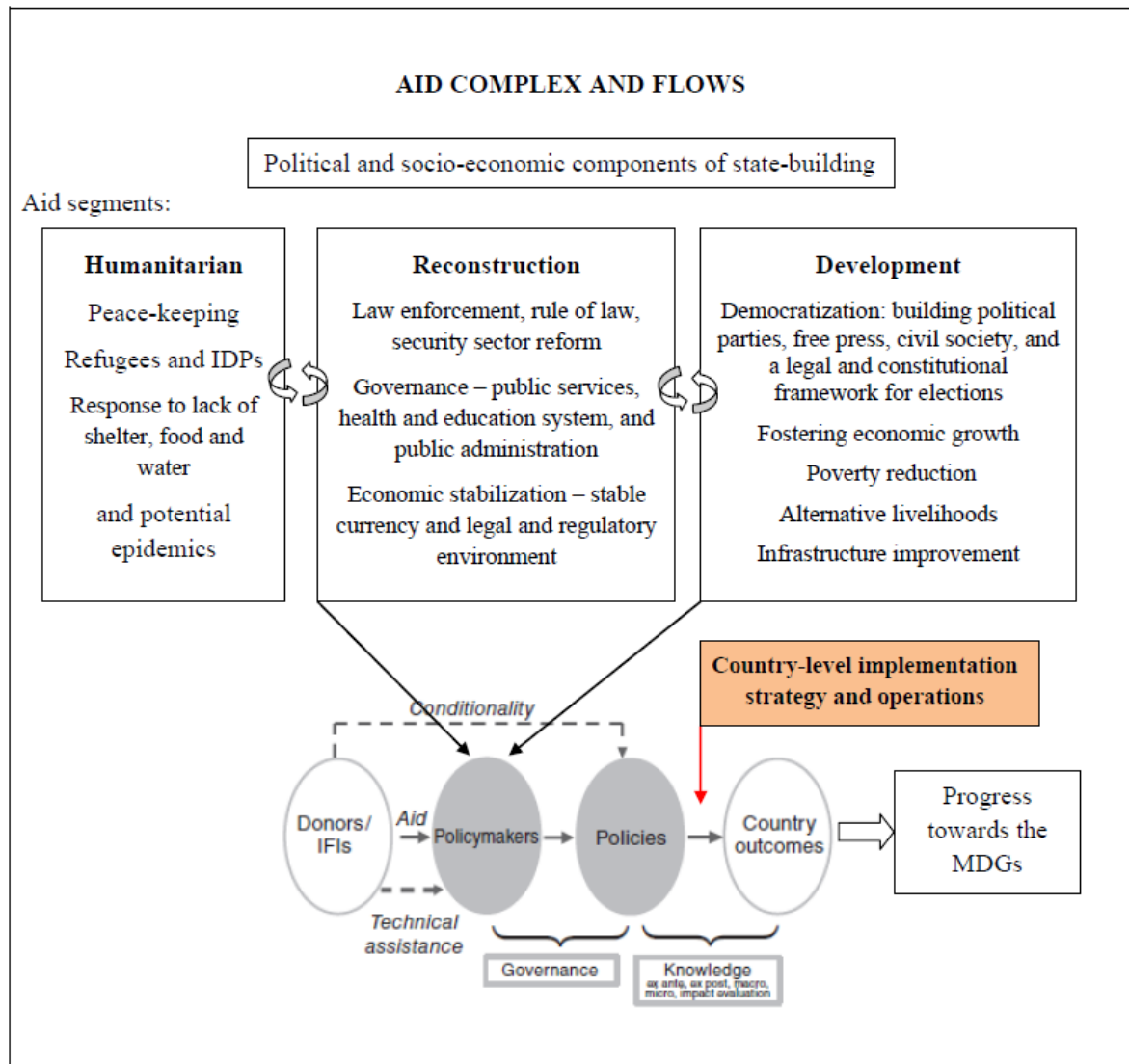
This project focuses on a 'post-conflict environment'. As we discussed in detail in Chapter II, these environments are characterized by ongoing security constraints, low counterpart government capacity, and weak national institutions (see for instance, del Castillo 2008, UNDP 2009a, Rocha Menocal and Mulley 2006, WB 2008b).

The gravity of security constraints fluctuates substantially in various parts of Afghanistan at various points of the period between 2002-2008 that this project covers,

ranging from full-fledged military combat situations in some provinces to relatively stable and secure environment in others. To account for such fluctuations in security, the influence insecure conditions had on project success is measured on case by case basis for each project through the survey questionnaire.

Of the three standard segments of post-conflict aid – humanitarian, reconstruction, and development (for instance Ghani and Lockhart 2008, p.106), this study only covers projects related to reconstruction and development. It excludes humanitarian projects aimed at an immediate and short-term impact (immediate shelter, food distribution, etc.), as their nature and implementation logistics differ substantially, and would require a separate framework outside the scope of this study. Figure 5.1 visualizes the segments of foreign aid, and the role of project implementation in the overall aid structure. Another important consideration influencing such choice is that while development agencies have a mandate to collaborate with governments, humanitarian agencies are expected to keep a certain distance from the political process. Such distance is required so that humanitarian agencies stay true to the principles of humanitarian engagement – humanity, impartiality, neutrality – ensuring that assistance is provided to those most in need, and regardless of political considerations.

Figure 5.1



Source: author, based on Bourguignon and Sundberg (2007), Dobbins et al. (2007), Ghani and Lockhart (2008)

The term ‘reconstruction’ as defined by Fukuyama (2006, p.3-14) refers to the restoration of war-torn or damaged societies to their pre-conflict situation, while the term ‘development’ ‘refers to the creation of new institutions and the promotion of sustained economic growth, events that transform the society in an open-ended way into something that it has not been previously.’ Reconstruction is the more attainable

task and is something that ‘outside powers have shown themselves historically able to bring about.’ Development is a much more difficult task, since it entails the creation of such institutions and possibly the weakening or destruction of existing, ‘unofficial’ structures run by warlords or druglords.¹⁴⁹

The term ‘project sectors’ refers to the substantive area of intervention, categorizing projects into three overarching sectors – Governance and the Rule of Law (to include public administration, financial management, law enforcement, criminal justice, and good governance efforts), Social Sector (covering health, education, and other social affairs), and Infrastructure and Rural Development (to include construction, agriculture, irrigation, and alternative livelihoods projects).

Authors argue that a careful combination of interventions in these sectors is required for success in reconstruction and development, and that activities in the different areas should not necessarily be initiated sequentially. Rather, all necessary tasks—humanitarian, military, political, social, and economic—are interconnected, and hence need to be pursued at the same time. This indeed makes a coherent strategy absolutely necessary (Hamre and Sullivan 2002, p.92). Similarly, Dobbins et al. (2007, p.3) writes that ‘if adequate funding is available, [different tasks] can and should proceed in tandem. But if a higher-order sector’s priorities are not adequately resourced, investment in lower-order ones is likely to be wasted’. The right combination of

¹⁴⁹ Fukuyama, F. (2006). *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

initiatives in the aftermath of a conflict therefore is important, and varies with the circumstances of a particular country, and of the region this country is a part of.¹⁵⁰

Priorities are dictated by the situation on the ground and ‘each country will end up with a different strategy depending on factors peculiar to its own situation and on the level of international support that it can manage to attract’ (del Castillo 2008, p.221).

Under the new aid paradigm principles, these sector priorities, and priorities within each sector, are defined and put on paper most commonly as a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IMF 2002)¹⁵¹. Thus, Afghanistan’s post-conflict reconstruction and development effort was structured under the country’s PRSP, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). It consists of eight main pillars and related sectors (Figure 5.2).

¹⁵⁰ Bruce Reidel, Afghanistan Policy Review Chair for the Obama Administration in an interview with PBS News Hour, said ‘Afghanistan should be measured against the standards of the region it works in. We don’t have to build a modern state in Afghanistan to improve it. Simply building roads, so that farmers can get their crop to the market, will fundamentally change the dynamics of this country’. PBS, aired October 16, 2009.

¹⁵¹ Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) are prepared by the member countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as external development partners, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Updated every three years with annual progress reports, PRSPs describe the country’s macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs over a three year or longer horizon to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs and major sources of financing. Interim PRSPs (I-PRSPs) summarize the current knowledge and analysis of a country’s poverty situation, describe the existing poverty reduction strategy, and lay out the process for producing a fully developed PRSP in a participatory fashion.

Figure 5.2 – Afghanistan National Development Strategy diagram

AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (ANDS)							
SECURITY	GOVERNANCE	SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT					
Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3	Pillar 4	Pillar 5	Pillar 6	Pillar 7	Pillar 8
1 - Security	2 - Good Governance	3 - Infrastructure & Natural Resources	4 - Education & Culture	5 - Health & Nutrition	6 - Agriculture Rural Development	7 - Social Protection	8 - Economic Governance & Private Sector Development
Sectors							
Security	Justice	Energy	Education	Health & Nutrition	Agriculture & Rural Development	Social Protection	Private Sector Development & Trade
	Governance, Public Administration Reforms & Human Rights	Transportation	Culture, Media & Youth			Refugees, Returnees & Internal Displaced Persons	
	Religious Affairs	Water Resource Management					
		Information & Communications Technology					
		Urban Development					
		Mining					
Cross-cutting Issues							
Capacity Building							
Gender Equality							
Counter Narcotics							
Regional Cooperation							
Anti-Corruption							
Environment							

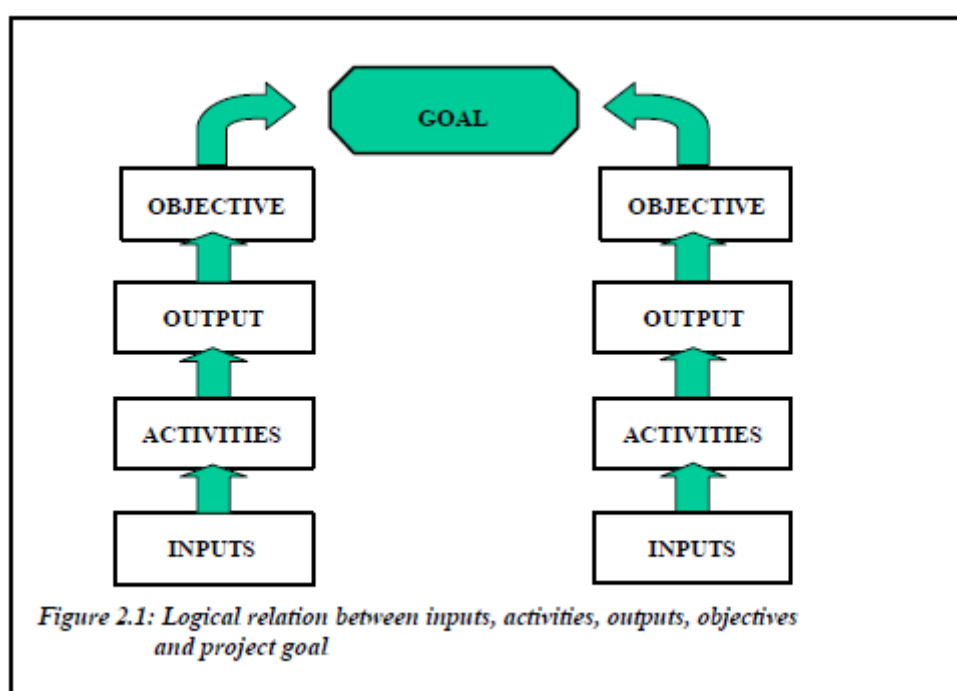
Source: UNDP 2009a

Because success in post-conflict recovery hinges upon a sensible strategy across sectors, this study considers projects in all major sectors. This is crucial in reflecting the reality on the ground in Afghanistan. It also makes it possible to analyze effectiveness in projects with varying complexity, all of which are needed to foster progress. I address this consideration in more detail in the following chapters.

Throughout this study, the term ‘projects in the field’ refers to reconstruction and development assistance projects implemented on the ground in recipient countries.

Project is a set of planned undertaking that is designed to achieve a specific objective with given resources and within a specific time period. The resources are project inputs without regard to technical, financial or human resources. The project time frame is the time period that a project started and ended, therefore it is not an on-going activity or a routine work. The program is a group of projects that will lead to the achievement of a broader scope of some policy results such as the elimination or alleviation of existing problems. Project inputs and activities are designed with the aim of achieving the set goal, with the consideration of efficient application of project resources and sustainability and impact of project results (UNODC IEU 2002).

Figure 5.2.1



Source: UNODC Design and Evaluation of Development Projects (UNODC IEU 2002)

I study projects of international aid agencies and bilateral donors as they are implemented in accordance with the project document by an organization-based project team comprising international and national staff.

The terms project implementation ‘effectiveness’ and project implementation ‘success’ act as mutually interchangeable terms for the achievement of project objectives as set out in the project document and given the micro-level project effectiveness as discussed in Chapter II. There is a possible conceptual difference between effectiveness as referring to achievement of outcomes and outputs envisaged (Isham et al. 1997).¹⁵² However, as we discuss later in this Chapter, projects are designed and evaluated with the consideration of sustainability and impact of the results achieved. Additionally, measuring longer-term outcomes of projects requires impact evaluations conducted after five to ten years upon project completion¹⁵³, and based on baseline data collected before the start of the project to allow for before-after analysis (WB 2009b). Relying on the micro-level definition of project success, and in order to achieve a meaningful sample size, this study uses as its measure of success the achievement of outputs as recorded in an evaluation report prepared by an independent evaluation unit, and makes no distinction between project success and effectiveness.

¹⁵² The difference between outputs and outcomes is significant and important: Outputs are tangible products of funds and activities (i.e project deliverables), for instance a training course, or a set of medical equipment provided. Outcomes are the result and the impact of these outputs, i.e an improved level of skills following a training, or better medical diagnostics allowed by medical equipment.

¹⁵³ So as to allow time for impact to appear.

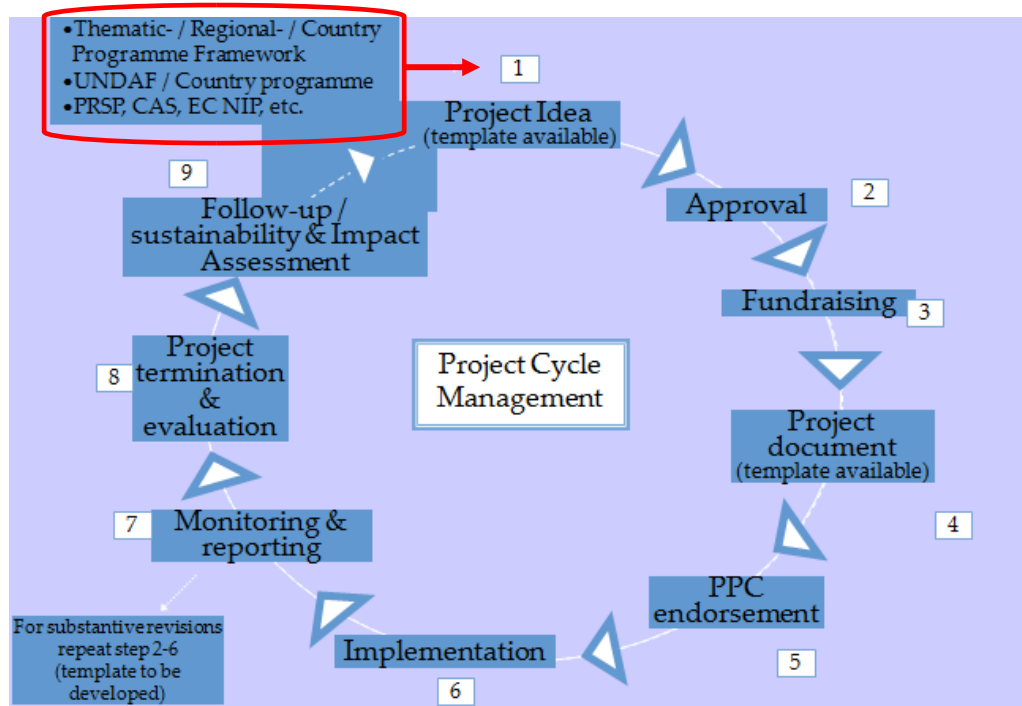
5.2 Building an Explanatory Model of Project Effectiveness in Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development

As suggested in the literature, in order to generate a theoretical framework on effectiveness in a particular setting, and to verify the importance of a certain factor objectively, it is necessary to identify all of the variables in the domain of project implementation effectiveness, and have them tested in a comprehensive model. In designing this model, one needs to see how these project effectiveness variables are similar or related (Steers 1975) and then ‘weed out the overlap’, and get down to core variables (Campbell 1977, p.13-55).

In Chapter III, based on a review of the literature, a comprehensive list of factors mentioned in relation to project success was compiled. Given the logic of the process of project conception and design, the factors of strategic vision and commitment of the donor/investor belong to the pre-project implementation stage. Negotiations and decisions that pertain to these two factors take place at the highest political levels, at the level of governments and top management of international financial and aid institutions. Such decisions are on the priorities in aid distribution and allocation, sectors of outmost attention, and on creating and launching programmes and projects that fit within the overarching umbrella and sectors of intervention defined by national development plans and poverty reduction papers (PRSPs) (figure 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). They do not pertain to operational and tactical matters of project implementation that are regulated by the implementation teams on the ground. Project implementation teams have little recourse

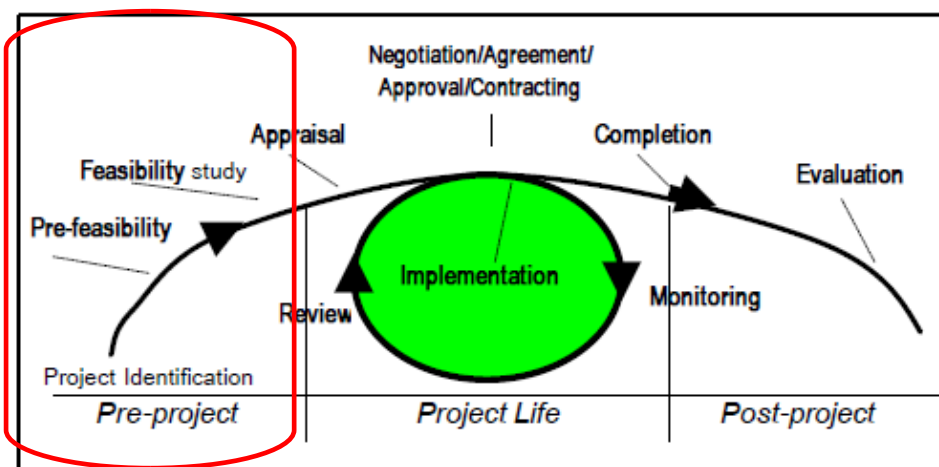
and need to influencing and changing these overarching decisions on policy directions and funding allocations.

Figure 5.2.2



Source: Project Cycle Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (Eckert 2006)

Figure 5.2.3

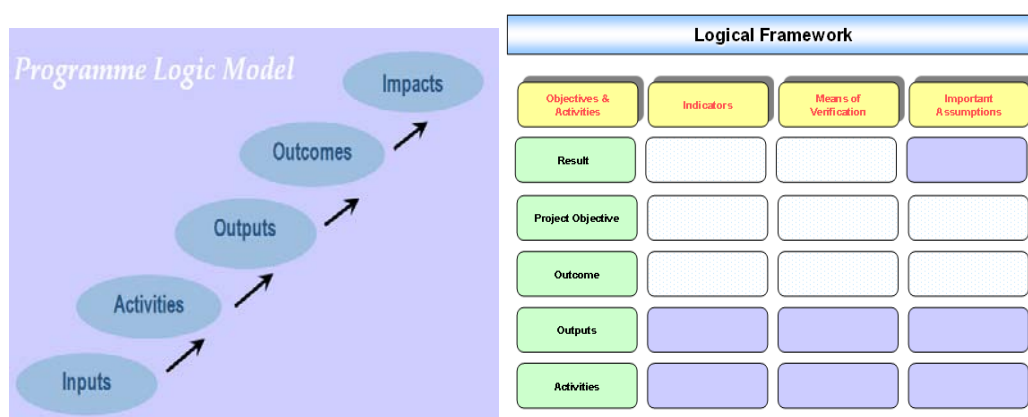


Source: Design and Evaluation of Development Projects (UNODC IEU 2002)

Vision and commitments under PRSPs and Programme Frameworks *precede* the process of project design and implementation. Agreements and commitments made at this highest level set the overall course for the assistance provided. They do not directly pertain to specific technical arrangements and logistics of project implementation which this study is set to examine. These factors do not directly influence the outcome of operational project implementation on the ground and were therefore excluded from the assessment under this study.

As for the factor of planning, this activity takes place in the shape of the design of a log-frame with related activities and outputs, and is a part of the project management and related M&E exercise, (Figure 5.2.5) where progress is assessed against the project log-frame and activities and timelines it contains. The planning, design and quality of project implementation log-frames will therefore be discussed under the M&E factor, and will not be included in the model as a stand-alone factor.

Figure 5.2.5



Source: Project Cycle Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (Eckert 2006)

The factors of the national government's support to project objectives, and good field donor coordination, on the other hand, are directly relevant to project operations and thus influence project success or failure, and are included into the model.

The assessment of a crucial but delicate factor of corruption will be undertaken under the discussion of the national governments support, as a blunt inquiry on corruption in the survey and semi-structured interviews would likely result in defensive and subjective responses, and have an adverse effect on the assessment of this factor.

In the next step, the model is expanded by adding factors reflecting project *design characteristic* and factors that speak to the *logistic and operational arrangements and features*. The set of project design characteristics consists of project budget, duration, complexity, and coverage. The set of operational and logistic factors includes project leadership, adequate personnel resources, consistent monitoring and evaluation, rest and recuperation cycles (R&R) (UNDP 1996, UNICSC 2008)¹⁵⁴, assistance from a Provincial Reconstruction Team. The factors in these two sets do not take a preeminent role in the discourse on aid project success, but have a potential of influencing project implementation process and therefore it is important to account for their possible influence. For the same reason, I also introduce into the model exogenous factors such as the security and economic situation at the project implementation site.

¹⁵⁴ Rest and Recuperation, or R&R, is a provision envisaged by the contracts of UN international staff members working in the conditions of hardship at insecure non-family duty stations. Under this rule, staff members are entitled for a week of paid vacation and a fixed travel cost outside the duty station every 42 days worked on end. Usually, staff members combine this with their accumulated leave days and are away for 2 weeks every 6 weeks worked, which in theory, could make for frequent and lengthy disruptions. The best practice is to have arrangements made within the project unit for back-stopping or sequenced leaves when there is a staff member assigned to be in charge of the process so that the work flow is not stalled. This requires project managers' regular attention and good planning.

The extended model serves to account for other possibly important determinants of project success not included in the sparse specification, and to avoid drawing false associations between the factors of national government's support and of field donor coordination and project success.

The sources that helped to pin down definitions for project success (Figure 5.3 below) were outlined in the literature review. The operational definitions that were used in data collection is put forth in Chapter VI on Data Composition and Quality, together with the respective descriptive statistics for the reader's ease of reference and clarity.

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 show the additive linear version of our explanatory model of reconstruction and development project effectiveness.

Figure 5.3

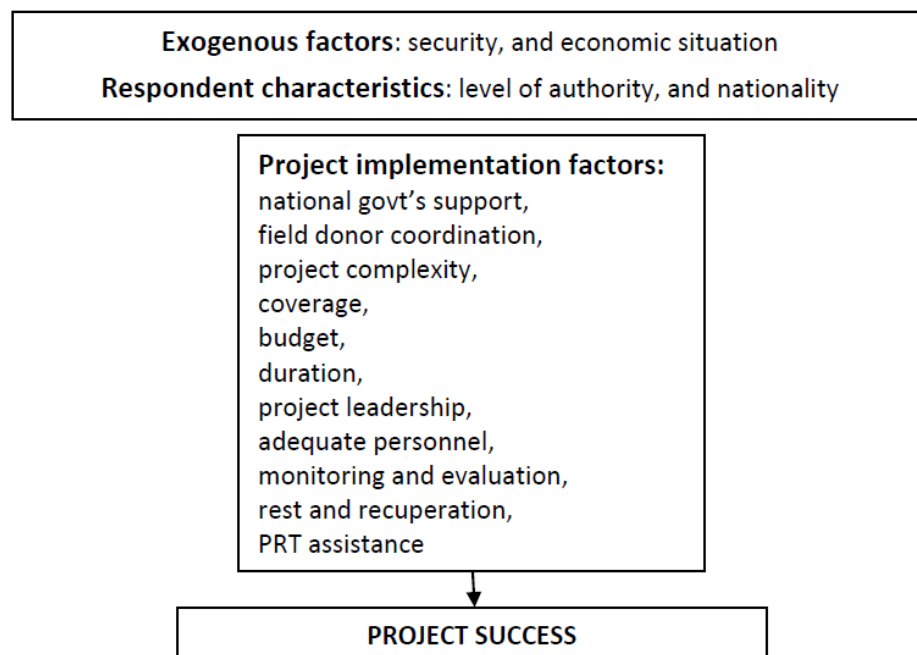


Figure 5.4 – Additive explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development

$$Y = \alpha X + \beta Z + \gamma A + \delta Z,$$

where

Y is project effectiveness

X is a vector of project characteristics, containing,

X₁ = National government's support

X₂ = Donor coordination

X₃ = Project leadership

X₄ = Complexity

X₅ = Coverage area

X₆ = Budget

X₇ = Duration

X₈ = Adequate personnel

X₉ = Monitoring and evaluation

X₁₀ = Rest and Recuperation

X₁₁ = PRT assistance

Z is a vector of characteristics of the project environment, containing,

Z₁ = Economic situation (household income)

Z₂ = Security situation

A is a vector containing characteristics of the survey respondents.

The economic wellbeing of the population at the project implementation site was measured as annual household income. The cultural and corruption factors were not directly included in the model and in the survey questionnaire. This is because trying to obtain a meaningful, objective measure of these two factors on the project level by including them in the questionnaire survey would have been unwise given the delicate nature of the issues. The phenomenon of corruption might have serious negative impact on project implementation success, inquiring about possible occurrence of various forms of corruption in a questionnaire survey would be more counterproductive than useful, especially if the respondent is a national staff member traditionally not used to speak openly of difficult, delicate matters.

Therefore, to go around such technical constraint while recognizing the importance of cultural and corruption factor and the necessity to account for their influence on project implementation success, these two factors were addressed in the course of the semi-structured interviews and analyzed and reported on through coding of the interview accounts. Cultural and corruption factors were brought up in the course of the discussion on the quality of national governments support and the components that influence the quality of such support. In addition, the coding of the interviews helped to reflect the frequency of respondents mentioning other certain component

within implementation factors. Where possible, such interview coding¹⁵⁵ was used to examine the correlation of such component with project success.

Finally, in order to mitigate the possibility of biased responses that could lead to spurious relationships in the regression analysis, I include in the model two control variables for personal characteristics of respondents that might influence the objectivity of their responses (Babbie 1998, p.280, Gilovich et al. 2002): the respondent's position/authority within the project in question, and whether the respondent is a national or international staff member. For instance, respondents of higher position and authority may feel more comfortable giving a critical feedback, thus giving lower scores to project success factors that were evaluated through the questionnaire. The same applies to the second characteristic: national staff members may be less inclined to give critical feedback than their international colleagues as giving critical comments is usually not in the culture and habit of the Afghan people¹⁵⁶. Another possible subjectivity in responses might be in that international staff members may feel greater ownership of their projects and therefore give higher scores to the practices employed during project implementation (Hoorens 1993).

There might be a complex structural relationship between project success (Y), project leadership (X3), and national government's support (X1), as one might argue that

¹⁵⁵ For the purpose of such analysis of semi-structured interview accounts, related projects would be categorized into two categories – 'successful' and 'unsuccessful', as opposed to the categorization into 5 groups used for other statistical analysis.

¹⁵⁶ Interview # 49, Kabul, 23 November 2009, Interview # 63, Kabul, 4 November 2009, Interview # 50, Kabul, 18 November 2009.

a strong project leader would be able to build and maintain a good relationship with the national authorities and thus galvanize national buy-in to the project goals.

Similarly with factors of adequate personnel (X7) and consistent monitoring and evaluation (X8): in a project with strong leadership, there might be a higher likelihood that adequate personnel is hired, and regular monitoring and evaluation is enforced.

Finally, projects with stronger national government's support (X1) may tend to have a higher degree of donor coordination (X2) through the coordinating support of the national government.

I explore these issues by carefully analyzing how project characteristics interact with each other and how they relate individually and jointly to success. However, such structural challenge has implications for the causal interpretation of results, as formal testing is ultimately beyond the scope of what the data permits.

5.3 Hypotheses

In order to test my explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict field conditions, I posit the following hypotheses derived from the literature, which I proceed to test empirically:

First Tier Hypotheses

I first consider hypotheses relating to the relationship between project success and project characteristics considered individually. According to the discussion and

arguments in international aid literature pertinent to donor-recipient relations, I propose:

Hypothesis 1. The national government's support to project objectives (X1) will be positively correlated with project Success (Y).

Donor coordination, at any level, is said to be crucial for the success of aid programmes and projects. Weak coordination is often thought of as one of the reasons for low aid effectiveness (McGillivray et al. 2005). However, there are also accounts that point at the down side and adverse effects of in-country donor coordination on project success. It seems as if donor coordination is indeed important when we speak of coordination among the agencies at a higher HQ level, for instance to agree to merge funds and have a joint programme or channel aid money through a Trust Fund¹⁵⁷. However, it is not established empirically whether donor coordination at the *field implementation* level has a positive impact on the success of projects. I therefore disagree with the authors who prescribe coordination as a universal, unconditionally positive exercise at any stage, including at the field implementation level, and posit:

Hypothesis 2. Donor coordination (X2) will not be correlated with project Success (Y).

Acknowledging the fact that for some projects, donor coordination might have no relevance at all while for the others there might be more space for joint action (WB 2007a), I develop the following hypothesis.

¹⁵⁷ For instance, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) funded by 24 donors and administered by the World Bank covers a number of development areas (WB 2006b). Similarly, Counter-narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) of Afghanistan administered by UNDP is another example of a Trust Fund, funded by 18 donors, and aimed at law enforcement and counter narcotics initiatives (UNDP 2009a).

Based on the arguments of the authors who advocate for a stronger/tougher position of the donor, I postulate that strong project leadership will be positively correlated with project success.

Hypothesis 3. Strong Project Leadership (X3) is positively correlated with project Success (Y).

The following four project design characteristics are expected to be negatively correlated with project success according to various accounts in the literature.

Israel (1987) through his study of institutional development aid projects shows that projects with clear-cut instructions and parameters tend to be more successful as they are easier to implement, while projects with *policy and capacity development* components are more complex, fluid in nature, and are harder to implement. Thus, greater project complexity, characterized by its capacity building component, is expected to have a negative correlation with project success.

Hypothesis 4. Higher complexity, i.e. projects with larger Capacity Building (X4) component, will be negatively correlated with project Success (Y).

Hypothesis 5. A wider coverage area (X5) of the project is negatively correlated with project Success (Y).

Hypothesis 6. Bigger project budgets (X6) are negatively correlated with project Success (Y). Similarly to projects with longer duration, such projects are likely to be more complex, harder to implement, and therefore less likely to succeed.

Hypothesis 7. A lengthy project duration (X7) is negatively correlated with project Success (Y), as projects of longer duration are more likely to be affected by insecure conditions on the ground, warlords and insurgency. Longer duration projects are also likely to be more complex, which reduces the likelihood of project success in environments characterized by poor economic and political development.

The following four logistic and operational arrangements and features are said to be positively correlated with project success by both streams of literature used in this study.

Hypothesis 8. Adequate personnel (X8) is positively correlated with project Success (Y).

Hypothesis 9. Strong M&E practices (X9) are positively correlated with project Success (Y).

Hypothesis 10. Rest and Recuperation cycle (X10) will be negatively correlated with project Success (Y) due to potentially frequent and lengthy disruptions in project operations resulting from the staff being absent on leave.

The latter hypothesis (10) stems from the previous hypothesis on Adequate Personnel required for successful project implementation, and is based on my personal observations and experience with the Rest and Recuperation (R&R) practice¹⁵⁸.

To test the value and impact of PRTs assistance to project teams to date (where applicable) I make the following hypothesis.

¹⁵⁸ While R&R is a UN practice for its long-term contracted staff, the schedules for consultants with short term assignments are calculated with the same logic in mind. Other development agencies and international NGOs on the ground tend to follow a similar pattern for leaves and compensation.

Hypothesis 11. The assistance received from PRTs (X11) will have positive relationship with project Success (Y).

The following two exogenous factors are expected to be negatively correlated with project success according to various accounts in the literature.

Hypothesis 12. Low income per household (Z1) in the area of project implementation is negatively correlated with project Success (Y).

Hypothesis 13. Greater insecurity (Z2) in the area of project implementation is negatively correlated with project Success (Y).

Second Tier Hypotheses:

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, there might be a complex structural relationship and interaction between some project factors which is worth examining.

The second set of hypotheses aims to answer questions as to such relationship and interaction between factors in making project success more likely.

The first two hypotheses in this cluster intends to investigate whether the national government's support has an equal influence on project success both on its own and when it is complemented by another factor. Thus, as is intuitive, I develop a hypothesis that:

Hypothesis 14. National government's support (X1) supported by strong leadership (X3) on the side of the project has a stronger positive influence on project success (Y) than national government support on its own.

This hypothesis can also be interpreted to consider whether national government's support matters for project success, even when project leadership is poor.

Accounts in the literature mention that among the qualities of a strong project leader is the ability to establish productive working relationship with the partners, as well as create good accountability mechanisms. This argument generates concrete hypotheses that can be tested empirically:

Hypothesis 15. Projects with strong project leadership (X3) will have a higher degree of the national government's support (X1), and

Hypothesis 16. Projects with strong project leadership (X3) will have a better (stronger) M&E practice (X9).

These hypotheses were analyzed using quantitative methods such as cross tabulation, linear regression, ordered logit regression, and multinomial logit regression.

Since the data generally does not permit for a strict causal interpretation of hypotheses tests, in order to strengthen the results, I complement the quantitative analysis with qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were coded to reflect the responses pertaining to the project implementation factors where applicable.

5.4 Measuring Project Implementation Success

As stated above, in the context of this study, the criteria for determining project success is the degree to which a project meets its stated objectives, rather than direct measures

of project impacts (de Wit 1988). Thus, the dependent variable of project effectiveness or project success (Y), is measured using standard evaluation reports (WB 2005a) by the independent evaluation units or external consultants, who impartially assess the success of a project based on the attainment of objectives as specified in the project document. This impartiality is a crucial feature for an objective assessment of projects success, and this study therefore limits itself to projects for which independent evaluations were conducted.

The requirement that the evaluators are independent and impartial is a standard practice of monitoring and evaluation in international aid agencies. The provisions to satisfy this requirement include two arrangements. First, the prospective evaluators are nominated and selected by the (centralized) Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) or Evaluations Department of an agency, and not by the office or programme to be evaluated. Second, the selection of evaluators by IEU's is performed on the basis of evaluator's independence from and impartiality to the programmes and activities to be examined.

The Independent Evaluation Units, as is implied by the name, are independent as they do not fall within the overall organizational hierarchy. Such units usually report and deliver the results of evaluations directly to the heads of the organizations or Boards of Governors, with thematic and regional divisions having no recourse to influencing the evaluation process and outcomes (please see Annexes 11, 12, 13 for the organizational location of evaluation units within the structures of the WB, UNODC,

and USAID as an example). Regional and thematic divisions in charge of an evaluated project are given a chance to respond to evaluation observations and recommendations in writing and as per established procedure and timelines, with their comments incorporated into the final evaluation report by the evaluation team, if deemed necessary and relevant.

The IEU's consideration and selection of evaluators is guided by several established criteria spelled out in every organization's evaluation strategy and guidelines (UNODC IEU 2005, World Bank 2009a for instance). The number of consultants in an evaluation team is defined by the evaluation team leader who is hired first, and assists the IEU in the evaluation design and in building up the evaluation team. IEU selection criteria for the team leader and team members require that a) the evaluator is an expert consultant on a specific subject or area, b) has previous experience of conducting evaluation, and c) has no previous involvement, at any level or in any capacity, in the programme or project to be evaluated and in the intended outcome of the evaluation. To make sure that the evaluator approaches the assessment independently and impartially, the IEU must include a statement of independence and impartiality of evaluation team members in the terms of reference (TOR)¹⁵⁹ for the evaluation. Such statement spells out the nominating parties for evaluation team members, the external nature of the evaluators, and the absence of prior involvement of the evaluator in the programme

¹⁵⁹ TORs define the Background, Objectives, Scope of services, Evaluation methods, Evaluation team composition, and Planning and implementation arrangements. The statement on evaluators' independence and impartiality must be included within the Evaluation Team Composition clause.

under evaluation. IEU's often maintain a roster of evaluation consultants, drawing on the expertise of reputable international development consultancies and auditing firms.

The aid agencies whose projects are included in this study each have their own operational evaluation practices (Bamberger et al. 2006, IFAD 2000) and use different titles for their reports - 'Project Performance Assessments', 'Termination Reports', 'Implementation Completion and Results Reports', 'Audits', and 'Terminal Evaluation Reports'.

The agencies under this study also use different ranking schemes. The World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, for instance (see Figure 5.5), applies a ranking into six project success categories from 'Highly Satisfactory' to 'Highly Unsatisfactory' (WB 2008a). DFID's Evaluation Department uses a different scale and terminology, scoring project performance from 1 to 5 and categorizing it into 3 categories. The first category - projects that are 'Completely' or 'Largely successful' in meeting its objectives are scored 1 or 2. Second category - projects in need of an amendment would score 3 (or sometimes 4), and third category - projects requiring either a major revision or closure would be scored 4 or 5 (DFID 2009).

Figure 5.5 – a Sample of the World Bank Project Success Rating Scale

IEG rating of projects meeting development objectives	Percentage of Projects in Rating Category		
	FY98–02	FY03–07	Percentage point change
Highly satisfactory	6%	4%	–2
Satisfactory	45%	45%	0
Moderately satisfactory	21%	29%	+8
Moderately unsatisfactory	9%	10%	+1
Unsatisfactory	16%	10%	–6
Highly unsatisfactory	2%	1%	–1

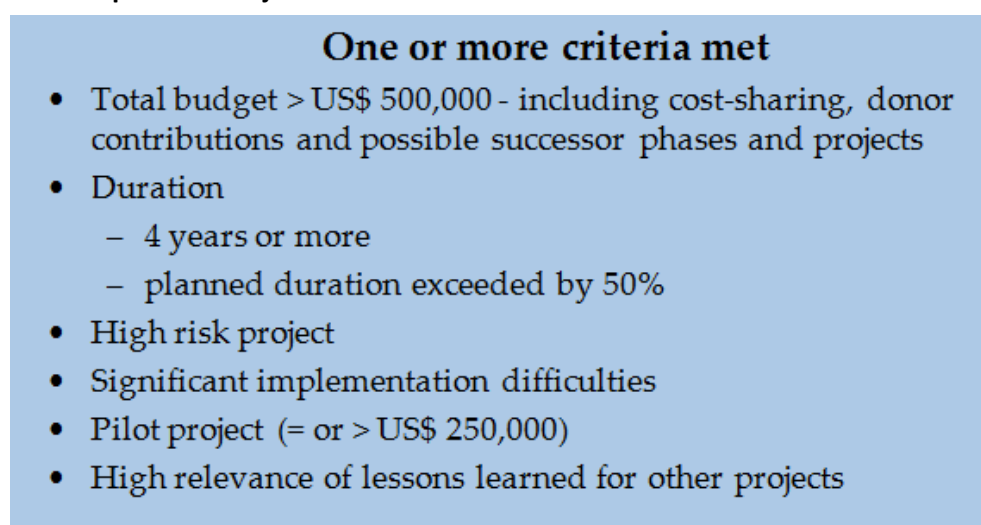
Source: World Bank database.

At first glance this difference might seem like a substantial problem for compiling a *uniform* account of success rate, making the projects in the analysis comparable. Simply relying on similar success ratings assigned to projects by different agencies would be incorrect as similar term/rating of success may have a different numerical value in different agencies. This is particularly true for projects falling in the middle of the success rating scale, i.e. for instance World Bank projects in the middle categories of ‘Moderately Satisfactory’ and ‘Moderately Unsatisfactory’ could both fall into DFIDs second category – ‘Projects in need of an amendment’, despite them actually having different percent of objectives achieved.

What helps us solve this issue is that, crucially, most evaluation reports by different agencies share a common feature – namely a clear estimate of the percentage of project objectives achieved. A commonly accepted international best practice in evaluations is to give an account on five project features such as ‘relevance’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘efficiency’, ‘impact’, and ‘sustainability’ (WB 2009b, Scanteam 2005, UNODC 2005). The ‘Effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’ render a precise estimate of successfully attained project objectives, which enables us to bring the ratings into a uniform range, and avoid discrepancy in success rating by applying a single scale. A drawback of this approach (which is, however, a priori expected to affect all projects equally) is that the share of objectives met obviously does not distinguish between essential and less essential goals.

The usual practice of the agencies in *selecting* projects for independent evaluation is based upon certain criteria. Projects that meet one or more of the characteristics below in Figure 5.6 would normally be required to be evaluated upon their completion (Eckert 2006, WB 2009b, UNEG 2005).

Figure 5.6 – Independent Project Evaluation Criteria



Source: Project Cycle Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (Eckert 2006)

Here, it is important to note that the ‘significant implementation difficulties’ criterion allows us to assume that most of the projects that experienced complications resulting in less successful project implementation would be evaluated. This provides a crucial component for this study – data on negative experiences – creating the variation in project success I aim to analyze.

Results of the projects selected for evaluation, are assessed against benchmarks on 1) achievement of results, 2) timeliness and quality of results, 3) project impact, and 4) sustainability of results/benefits (see Annex 4). This uniformity of assessment contributes to comparability of project success ratings.

Thus, having such uniform project success estimates in hand, to group projects into large discrete categories of success, I chose to apply a success scale used by the UN as a model grid of success rating (Figure 5.7) to avoid potentially subjective and therefore incomparable ratings of our dependent variable.

As shown in figure 5.7, the UN scale has five categories of project success. Using this scale, projects were grouped into ‘Highly Successful’, ‘Successful’, ‘Moderately Successful’, ‘Moderately Unsuccessful’, and ‘Unsuccessful’ categories, in keeping with a nomenclature consistent with World Bank terminology.

Figure 5.7 – UN Five-point Rating Scale of Project Implementation Success

Excellent / Highly Successful	=	90% +	(5)
Very good / Successful	=	75 – 89 %	(4)
Good / Moderately Successful	=	61 – 74 %	(3)
Fair / Moderately Unsuccessful	=	50 – 60 %	(2)
Unsatisf. / Unsuccessful	=	- 49 %	(1)

Source: UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit, 2005

In a few instances where an evaluation report did not provide a clear percentage estimate of the objectives achieved, projects were coded based on latent content analysis of project evaluations. There were 28 such projects requiring coding through latent content analysis. As opposed to “manifest” content analysis, which is used for analyzing the visible, surface content by concrete, precise terms, “latent” content analysis is well suited for ‘tapping the underlying meaning of communications (Babbie 2009, p.325). Weighing the meaning of evaluation reports only by the appearance of phrases such as “successful”, “unsuccessful”, “less successful” in the text would result in a rather

superficial assessment of the information contained in these reports. Similarly, the frequency of a phrase such as “good implementation rates” would not necessarily mean that the projects for which such phrase appeared more frequently was more successful than the one for which such phrase was used less frequently.

As Berg describes (2009, p.242), ‘manifest content is comparable to the surface structure present in the message, and latent content is the deep structural meaning conveyed by the message’. It is the reviewing of the entire document and analyzing the underlying meaning through latent content analysis that gives the advantage of an overall assessment of the matter in question (Babbie 1998, p.314). I therefore employed latent content analysis to be able to take into account implicit meaning and messages contained in evaluation reports, especially given the varying phraseology and communication styles used by different evaluators discussing project implementation ups and downs.

The quality and objectivity of data analysis through any form of content analysis rests in great deal on the coding of the raw data according to explicit, standardized conceptual framework. Therefore, the operational definition of a variable must include, as far as possible, all the qualities and features it has, with these qualities and features being mutually exclusive. The resulting coding scheme must be thoroughly pre-tested before the actual coding is conducted, particularly when one deals with terms and concepts that are subject to many interpretations.

While manifest content analysis is more objective but may be less valid, the drawback of the latent content analysis is that its depth and validity comes at a cost to its reliability. At the same time, reliability in content analysis is paramount, and ‘without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are useless’ (Neuendorf 2002, p.141).

There are two possible ways to address this issue and test whether ones analysis is reliable or not. When human coders are used in content analysis, reliability translates to inter-coder reliability or ‘the amount of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders’ (Neuendorf 2002, Kolbe and Burnett 1991, p.248). Inter-coder reliability test is conducted by involving two or more people in coding the same material and comparing the proportion of items coded the same. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999, p.266) argue that even if there might be a degree of subjectivity in coders judgments, if these judgments are intersubjective, i.e. shared across coders, the same meaning therefore is also likely to reach out to readers of the research.

Another way to test for reliability is an intra-rater reliability test, in which the same person codes the message once, and again after some time lapses, and compares the ratio of items coded the same. While this method is practically more convenient, it bears the risk of bias in the rate of agreement achieved between two coding results notwithstanding the requirement of time lapse.

To test the reliability of my content analysis, I therefore used the inter-coder reliability test, involving an additional coder was in latent content analysis and project

success ranking coding. A coding manual (Annex 3) was designed based on qualitative descriptions and key phrases in the evaluation reports *by the same agency* that contained numerical evaluation of project objectives attained. For instance, a project with 86% objectives attained also was described as having ‘a very good rate of objectives attained’. A similar phrase of ‘very good, close to excellent performance on all objectives of the project’ is used to describe a project by the same agency for which there was no numerical score, thus allowing to draw a parallel and place both projects in the same category of ‘successful’ (75 – 89 % objectives attained) projects¹⁶⁰.

Using an interval level measurement of the dependent variable of project success, and ordinal or interval level indicators for most independent variables, allows tracing carefully the change in the dependent variable associated with the change in independent variables included in our model. This is an important feature and the advantage of this study. One of the shortcomings of the study by Manza (2008) I mentioned earlier is that (given data limitations due to considerable security constraints in collecting it) it relied on binary measures of dependent variable of project success.

The design of this study allows me to analyze a sizable number of variables and weigh their impact, while controlling for the effects of the set of possible rival causal factors included in the model.

A multivariate model can also potentially give a strong explanation to the variation in the degrees of success of reconstruction and development projects, while a

¹⁶⁰ Out of 124 projects included in the study, 28 projects required coding through a latent content analysis.

large enough sample size should provide for achieving a greater precision in estimating the impact of individual variables.

5.5 Data Sources and Collection

To test my model, I used a novel survey design where evaluation reports were complemented with corresponding surveys and semi-structured interviews of international and national development practitioners that were involved in the implementation of that particular project.

The reason behind this approach is that, while on the one hand, it was important to solicit the opinions of aid practitioners on the factors of project success, it was also crucial to rely on an impartial assessment of such success. This was one of the insights derived from my participant observation research of reconstruction and development project implementation in Afghanistan at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime country Office for Afghanistan during 2008 and 2009.

Having had identified the initial research puzzle, my choice to employ participant observation method was dictated by the necessity to acquire first-hand understanding and experience of international aid and development work in order to build a solid base for framing the hypotheses and for consequent data collection. As is intuitive from the name, participant observation implies that the researcher participates in and observes the phenomenon under research from the inside. By employing this method and taking on a role in the very process of project implementation, I gained

insight into the conditions and circumstances under which aid projects were implemented on the ground, and into the underlying processes and factors that had a potential of influencing the flow of project operations, especially in a setting as complex as Afghanistan. Relying on this method helped me understand and identify key actors, and discover potential new avenues for the investigation of my research topic.

Indeed, the added value of the method is in that it allows combining participation in the process that is being studied with “maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data” (Fetterman 1998, p.34-35). Because of such combination of distance and objectivity on the one hand, and involvement and alleged subjectivity on the other, some authors argue that participant observation is an oxymoron (Ellen 1984). Jorgensen (1989, p.14-49) however shows that such combination is possible, and it provides an excellent tool to “generate practical and theoretical truths about human life grounded in the realities of daily experience”. The method, he writes, allows understanding the insider’s viewpoint, the details of everyday life, it helps to develop interpretive theories through an open-ended investigation and direct observation. Often conducted at the beginning of the data collection phase (Mack 2005, p.19), the method is particularly helpful for exploring a research question that focuses on “how” of a phenomenon or a process. It can be combined well with other qualitative research methods, and allows grasping the richness and complexity of a setting, thus providing an excellent foundation for hypotheses development and

hypotheses reassessment, as well as consequent data collection (DeWalt et al. 2002, p.13).

Conducting a participant observation requires a prolonged engagement in the setting under study, (Bogdewic 1999, p.82) which allows for “the less readily available aspects of a setting to become visible”. The researcher must maintain a degree of improvisation in the observation tactics; while at the same time perform a systematic recording of observations (Jorgensen, p.105). The ability to speak local language(s), to remember things that happen or are observed in the field, to be unassuming and maintaining objectivity are among the skills that are particularly useful in conducting participant observation (Bernard 1988, pp.270-282). Mastering these skills is easier by practicing them in the field, as the collection of data becomes easier as the researcher grows more comfortable in a new culture and setting (Bernard 1988, p.298).

There can be various degrees to which the researcher actually participates in the process, ranging from “complete” or “active” participant to “complete” or “limited” observer (Jaeger 1988, Junker 1960, cited in Crabtree and Miller eds. 1999). Similarly, the degree to which the identity of the researcher is known to his research subjects varies, making the participant observation covert or overt. Both approaches have its advantages and disadvantages, and the choice between two approaches depends on a particular case and setting the research is aimed at. For instance, under covert observations, the researcher does not disclose to the members of the group the actual reasons of his presence and involvement in this group, conducting the research secretly.

The major advantages of such approach include the avoidance of the problem of “reactivity” or “observer effect” (when research subjects behave differently knowing they are under observation), and the access to social groups who would otherwise not agree to being studied (Babbie 2009, p.290). There is however a major ethical drawback in conducting a covert observation, since the researcher has to employ a level of deceit about the nature of his presence within the group, in the belief that the data collected will be more reliable and valid. Authors argue that concealment is sometimes necessary, and often unavoidable, and that “the criticisms leveled against covert methods should not stop the fieldworker from engaging in research that involves covertness” (Lugosi 2006). Other disadvantages of a covered observation include constraint in recording the information openly, close friendships resulting from connections with members of the group under study, and the phenomenon of “going native”, when a researcher ceases to be a researcher and becomes a full-time group participant.

In overt observations, on the other hand, the researcher is open about the reasons of his presence in the group and has the consent of the group to conduct the research. Such positioning of course triggers the problems of “observer effect”. But most importantly, overt observation approach allows avoiding the problems of ethics in that the researcher does not need to lie on his role to the group under his observation. Data in such setting can also be recorded openly and properly.

The decision to employ an overt or covert strategy “is a delicate one” (Jorgensen 1989, p.46), and to a great degree, this choice depends on ethical considerations

involved. Such ethical considerations should be addressed in relation to the sensitivity of the research topic, the vulnerability of the researched individuals, and on the latitude the researcher has in responding to such ethical dilemmas by adjusting the level of involvement in the group (Li 2008).

Having weighed pros and cons of overt and covert approaches to participant observation, and given the ethical and practical considerations involved, I chose to make my participant observation overt. Such choice not only gave the advantage of avoiding ethical complications in an office that I was employed by. It also gave me crucial logistic, security and transportation support without which it would have been impossible to have the level of access and mobility necessary for my research given the circumstances of Afghanistan. Moreover, being open about the fact that my presence in the office serves not only a professional but also a benign academic purpose, in my view, did not alter the behavior of my colleagues. They were rather open and forthcoming both during the daily conversations and interaction in the office, and in the course of survey and interviews conducted later in the process.

Based in the headquarters in Kabul, I was closely involved in the implementation of the UNODC programme portfolio for Afghanistan. As a member of the management team, I became closely familiar and was often in charge of administrative and substantive programme implementation operations, regular monitoring and evaluation reviews, as well as interaction and collaboration with international partners and national counterpart agencies. I could also research and record data openly, and receive

crucial logistic and transportation support from the management of the UN agency I was employed by. Finally, speaking one of the two local languages – Farsi ¹⁶¹, was indispensable in establishing close communication and exchange with national colleagues, but even more so with the staff of national counterpart agencies and government line ministries in Kabul.

Thus, being able to rely on insider knowledge and the understanding obtained through such participant observation experience at the onset of the study allowed me to lay solid groundwork for the further formulation of this research project and data collection design. Later, having had such experience of working with the United Nations in Afghanistan, and being familiar with the procedures and actors in the project evaluation process, as well as having access to some of the electronic sources and knowledgeable personnel considerably facilitated the planning and performing the task of collecting existing evaluation reports, conducting the questionnaire survey, and conducting semi-structured interviews.

Thus, it was clear that relying on the assessment of the staff who were involved in the implementation of a particular project by asking them whether a project was successful would have been problematic in many respects. Respondents would be likely to have an obvious incentive to report a project as successful if they were involved or in charge of its implementation. They might be prone to remember and focus on

¹⁶¹ Farsi (Dari) and Pashto are two official languages in Afghanistan.

successful outcomes and not notice failures, or believe the share of failures was insignificant compared with successfully attained objectives.

As described earlier in the section on ‘Measuring project success’, the source that would be free of such biases, reporting more objectively on how well a given project did in achieving its stated objectives is independent project evaluation reports. The reports also serve as a source of information on project characteristics (see figure 3.7).

At the same time, while reports do speak to factors of national counterpart involvement and support, of donor coordination, or the role project leaders played, this information is usually neither detailed nor uniform enough to facilitate a valid quantitative analysis. This shortcoming was compensated for by the survey and semi-structured interviews.

The data were collected through two major methods: archival research and collection of evaluation reports in Afghanistan during 2008-2009, and survey and semi-structured interviews conducted during September – December 2009.

The information from both sources allowed me to create an original data set, sourcing the data for dependent and independent variables as follows (Figure 5.8):

Figure 5.8 – Data sources for dependent, independent variables and vectors

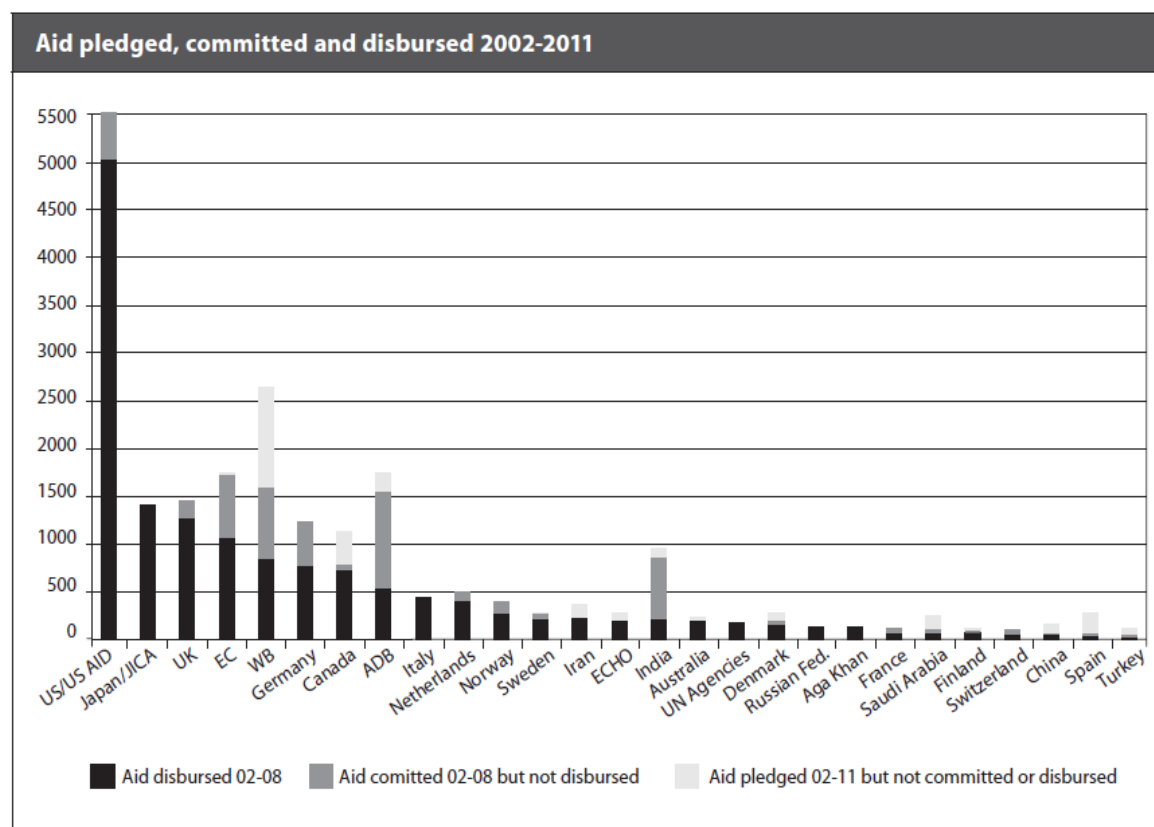
Evaluation report	Questionnaire survey	Semi-structured interviews	UNODC Annual Afghan Opium Poppy survey 2009
Success ranking	National government's support	Corruption	Household income
Complexity	Donor coordination	Cultural factors	
Coverage area	Project leadership		
Budget	Monitoring and evaluation		
Duration	Rest and Recuperation		
	Adequate personnel		
	PRT assistance		
	Security situation		
	Respondents characteristics vector: rank and whether it was an international or national staff member		

The data set covers projects by five major multilateral and bilateral aid agencies active in Afghanistan: World Bank, European Commission, US Agency for International Development, UK Department for International Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency (see Figure 5.9), plus the UN. It includes only projects that were completed and have an independent project evaluation by external consultants.

The period covered is 2002 – 2008, i.e. just after the interim government took power in late 2001, and until 2008, as projects completed after 2008 might not have been evaluated yet.

Figure 5.9 – Major international multilateral and bi-lateral donors in Afghanistan

AID IN AFGHANISTAN



Source: UNDP 2009a

Earlier attempts to examine the determinants of success in reconstruction and development projects share the same major limitation – each of them is focused on projects of a certain type, and implemented by a single agency. Israel's (1990) study was based on only World Bank projects with an institution building component, Manza (2008) focused on construction projects by the US military in Southern Iraq, and Narayan (1995) looked at the patterns of success in the World Bank's rural water supply projects.

Our data set comprises projects by not just one, but a variety of aid entities in various sectors, allowing us to test whether the factors under scrutiny are equally influential for projects of different nature and by different implementing entities.

Implementation and completion evaluation reports are fairly thorough reviews, based on most available documentation about the project, interviews with the managers at HQs level and in the field, project staff, and more often than not, visits to the project implementation site. They include feedback from national officials involved in the project on both the implementation and beneficiary sides. These reports are expected to give quite a reliable estimation of project success, complexity, budget, duration, and coverage.

The information that usually would not be available in evaluation reports was collected through a questionnaire survey, which would fill in for the missing accounts on the perceived importance of national government's support to project objectives, the intensity and outcome of the in-country donor coordination effort, the quality of project leadership, project staff, the quality of monitoring and evaluation exercise, impact of the rest and recuperation provision, and the assistance received from a PRT. The choice of a questionnaire survey over the alternative option of conducting focus groups was guided by the essential need to systematically link practitioners' responses with associated projects and project evaluation reports in an organized and clearly recorded way, safeguarding from the risk of confusion and wrong association between two sources.

Moreover, while focus groups are a useful tool to gauge initial topics of importance, areas of interest and possible directions for a research project, in the presence of a participant observation material and knowledge such method would be unnecessary. Finally, organizing a focus group session in Kabul, which would coordinate and bring together all desirable participants at the same time and location, would have been virtually impossible given frequent movement limitations as a result of severe security conditions, as well as due to excessive workload of most of the managerial staff working in Kabul.

Project Evaluation Reports

Collecting project completion evaluation reports was the first and important step in creating the data set required for this study, as only projects with evaluation reports could be included in the study.

The goal was to collect as complete a set of *all* existing evaluation reports for projects conducted in Afghanistan during 2002-2008 by six major aid and development agencies included in this study, in order to take the sample as close to the universe of projects evaluated, and thus as unbiased as possible.

Various agencies, even within the UN, have different policies in making the final evaluation reports available to the public. Some entities publish evaluation reports online, which is considered to be the international best practice. Others have

centralized HQs intranet archives accessible only to employees of the organization, or, in some instances, only to managerial staff.

Where access is restricted, this is often due to two considerations. Firstly, by their nature, the reports often contain delicate, and sometimes, confidential information, including the names of the staff involved in the implementation of the project, its budget and funding shortfalls, the national counterparts' contribution and performance, etc. In addition, the purpose of evaluations is to critically assess the effectiveness of the project implementation process and to bring to light its shortcomings, if any.

The reports quite often contain harsh criticism of various aspects of programming and implementation of aid projects. In such instances, supervisors and managers are often cautious in making the reports available to general public, in order to avoid bad publicity and greater criticism for the organization as a whole, which, among other consequences, could lead to funding cuts and weakening of political support from both the donor and recipient nation. Thus, more often than not, some of the agencies prefer to retain the reports under limited circulation for in-house reference and learning process.

Handling such variation in accessibility and possible complications required a structured approach and long-term planning of the data collection process.

Having collected the reports available on-line, and those accessible on UN data-bases and through each agency's central evaluation unit at the HQs, country office managers

and evaluation staff were approached to identify and obtain the reports available with the country offices.

In dealing with both HQ and country offices, it was important to avoid a situation in which I would be given access to *positive evaluation reports only*, while the negative feedback would be kept away (Geddes 1990, p.131). I pointed out that it is from the negative experience that we learn the most, and stressed that the data-set was designed in a way that it did not require specifying the implementing agency, and captured only the success rates and the characteristics of the project. In addition to verbal assurances of confidentiality, agencies were provided with written obligations of non-divulgence of evaluation reports data.

An objective researcher should not dismiss, however, that there might have been a slight chance that still not all negative reports were made available. Yet, during phone and in-person conversations with respective programme managers in Kabul, I was reassured that I have been given access to all existing evaluations, including the most critical documents in the archives. Given these, I tend to trust I received both positive and negative reports that existed.

In total, from the moment of initial archival and online research started in Kabul in mid 2008, and until the start of the fieldwork in September 2009, there were 174 evaluation reports collected for the projects by six major aid agencies implemented in Afghanistan during 2002-2008.

It would be ideal to be able to compare the number of reports collected to the universe of evaluation reports that exists for the period in question. However, compiling an account of the universe of reports produced proved problematic: a centralized record of all existing reports was only kept and available at only two out six agencies covered by this survey. Another agency created a list and archive of available evaluations after being requested to share their evaluation reports for the purpose of this study. No comprehensive list of evaluations was available for three agencies participating in this study.

Of all evaluations undertaken by those two agencies that kept complete records, only five evaluation reports could not be obtained¹⁶² from the first agency.

Questionnaire Survey Design and Selection of respondents

The survey instrument used to collect the data to complement project evaluations was seven pages long and consisted of a series of questions about the factors that may explain reconstruction and development project implementation success or failure in a post-conflict setting.

The survey strategy as a whole, and the questionnaire itself, were designed and conducted with four empirical challenges in mind:

- (i) To locate development practitioners who would be able to knowledgeably speak of a certain project, and, once located;

¹⁶² Reports that could not be obtained were not available with the Afghanistan country office, inquires with the HQs were unsuccessful.

- (ii) To solicit an objective response about their project implementation experience;
- (iii) To verify what factors explain the variation in project implementation outcomes; and
- (iv) To receive as much information as possible on the factors included.

The design of the questionnaire was mindful of the ‘respondent fatigue’ phenomenon (WB IEG 2009), particularly likely to occur under the circumstances of intensive work schedules in Afghanistan. The consideration of respondents fatigue was also chiefly the reason why simple questionnaire survey design was chosen over a design based on the principle of ipsative categorization, such as for instance Stephenson’s Q¹⁶³. Additionally, the relative inexperience of national project implementation staff with complicated survey techniques would create the likelihood of spurious responses. The questionnaire was therefore limited to 17 relatively simple questions, with an estimated burden of 15 minutes. Pre-testing of the questionnaire (Babbie 1998, p.193; WB 2009b) was conducted in Kabul with the help of ten staff members at one of the UN agencies. A number of useful comments as to the clearer phrasing, use of jargon, and potential additional categories were received and incorporated in the final version of the questionnaire.

Selection of survey respondents and interviewees

¹⁶³ Q methodology implies a ranking of variables, usually presented as statements printed on small cards, rather than asking respondents to rate their agreement with statements individually, thus attempting to capture the what people think about ideas in relation to other ideas, rather than in isolation.

As was discussed earlier, the dataset for this study was compiled on the basis of existing evaluation reports for projects implemented in Afghanistan during 2002-2008, and by five major development agencies covered by this study. Tests of external validity and representativeness of this data set, presented later in this chapter (p.247), provide evidence that the dataset is representative of the entirety of projects implemented in Afghanistan during the period under study. Such evidence of external validity is a point of departure for further data collection and analysis.

In the next step, and following the logic of the study's design, the evaluation reports in the data set needed to be matched with survey respondents who were closely involved in the implementation of a given project. Moreover, respondents had to be members of the managerial team within the said project, because lower level administrative staff is usually not sufficiently informed to be able to meaningfully answer survey questions¹⁶⁴. Finally, it was important to make sure that project leaders themselves did not act as respondents, as there was a set of questions in the survey that aimed to assess the quality of project leadership.

Given these three key requirements on prospective survey sample, probability sampling of reconstruction and development project managerial staff would not be appropriate even if it was possible (Bloch 2004, p.176), as random sampling would not allow to make sure that respondents meet the above three requirements. Therefore, the range of sampling methods through which the survey respondents (and consequent

¹⁶⁴ As staff at this level is usually not closely involved in dealings with national counterparts and discussions of policy and political considerations of project implementation operations.

interviewees) could be selected was limited to nonprobability sampling methods (Trochim 2006, Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero 2011, p.201).

From among the options¹⁶⁵ available to a researcher employing nonprobability sampling, the features of *purposive* (or judgment) sampling appeared to best fit to satisfy survey sample requirements. Purposive sampling is a technique that allows the researcher to select a sample of cases or people with a specific plan and purpose in mind (Cochran 1977, p.10; Patton 2002, p.228; Bernard 2006, p.189). The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, elicit the views of a target population possessing a specific expertise, thus enabling the researcher to answer a specific research question.

Within the purposive sampling methodology, there is a host of different sampling techniques¹⁶⁶, and during the course of a qualitative or mixed methods research design, more than one type of purposive sampling technique may be used given the complexity of the issue being examined (Teddlie et al 2007, p.83; Onwuegbuzie and Collins 2007, p.287). In this study, the selection of survey respondents was guided by a “criterion sampling” principle, while the consequent selection of interviewees for semi-structured interviews was conducted through an “expert sampling”.

The merit of criterion sampling is that it focuses on the population that has a certain set of characteristics, i.e. specific experience or exposure to an event, and it aims

¹⁶⁵ These are “quota sampling”, “purposive” sampling, “convenience” sampling, and “chain referral” or “snowball” sampling.

¹⁶⁶ Including Maximum variation sampling, Homogeneous sampling, Typical case sampling, Extreme (or deviant) case sampling, Critical case sampling, Criterion sampling, Expert sampling.

to examine this population in its entirety (Patton 2002, p.237). Selection through such technique is therefore influenced by these specific characteristics that a researcher is interested in. The aim to cover the entire population is because if a number of units were excluded, a significant piece of information would be missing (Given ed. 2008, p. 697-698).

The criteria for my respondents was person's managerial involvement in a given project included in the study, so that he/she would be able to attest to project implementation operations and the quality of project leader. Following this imperative, relevant development practitioners for each project were identified and located through a thorough research and networking. When the first choice respondent could not be located, another managerial staff member for the project was identified and contacted.

By the logic of nonprobability sampling, the degree to which a sample which was created through purposive sampling is representative of the entire population is not the major focus and strength of such technique (Patton 2002, p.230), and could be a potential disadvantage. However, since the inference this study was attempting to make was about the population of projects rather than the population of development practitioners, the representativeness of the sample of survey respondents was not critical. What was important is that the sample of projects was representative of the population of projects implemented in Afghanistan during 2002-2008, for which sufficient evidence is indeed available.

Most of the respondents for a given project that could not be located (45 cases) have relocated to another division/field office within the same agency since the completion of the project in question, moved to another agency, left the international development field, or retired. The tests for possible related non-response error show no immediate indication of such error (p.245).

Respondents belonging to the category of national staff members were Afghan nationals hired under a local contract, most with a college degree, many possessing graduate education. Respondents in the international category were expatriate professionals, or Afghans with dual nationality (8 cases).

As for the interviewees for consequent semi-structured interviews, their selection was conducted on the purposive (judgment) technique of expert sampling, which is used when one needs to obtain knowledge from individuals that have a particular expertise, and whose knowledge is likely to add new insight and potentially open new doors, allowing for greater data saturation (Given ed. 2008, p.697-698). Thus, from a pool of 124 survey respondents, I selected 87 semi-structured interviewees in an attempt to 1) solicit a deeper insight from most competent and experienced of respondents, and 2) reflect in more detail on particularly complex projects, with attention to interactions and ways, in which project factors influence success.

The ratio of semi-structured interviews conducted was 53 (61 percent) in successful category to 34 (39 per cent) in unsuccessful category, which is fairly reflective of the success/nonsuccess ratio in the main $N=124$ project dataset¹⁶⁷.

To solicit reliable answers from relevant respondents under the prevailing conditions of insecurity and intensive work schedules, the strategy was to first have a brief meeting with a respondent during which the respondent would fill out the survey questionnaire. A semi-structured interview with selected respondents would follow immediately after.

This combination allowed using the advantages of a self-completion questionnaire and interview methods to boost the quality of the data. It mitigated the risk of 'respondent's fatigue', allowed to make sure that the right person had answered the questions, and that all important questions were covered. Most importantly, using this combination of methods allowed for the author/surveyor being available to give a clarification if a respondent had difficulty answering a question, and to have a chance to 'ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies' (Bryman 2004, p.135, 543).

For several reasons, this approach was the most appropriate under the conditions of this study, and was, in particular, preferred to a web-based or email survey. First, the method was intended to help minimize non-response bias: under the circumstances in

¹⁶⁷ Survey respondents: 27per cent – in unsuccessful category, 73 per cent in successful category; Semi-structured interviewees:

Kabul, the likelihood that a less direct request to take a survey would simply be disregarded was high.

Second, it would allow minimizing self-selection bias, when only aid practitioners who achieved successful outcomes, or those who had positive experiences with the national counterpart and their project team would take the survey.

Third, the approach allowed for mitigating reporting error that might arise if selected respondents would pass the survey on for completion to an assistant or other staff member with less knowledge of the project. Instead, each relevant practitioner selected as a respondent was contacted and followed up with separately, to ensure the survey was taken, and in person.

Valuable advantages of administering the survey in person came at a price of a perceived lack of anonymity, however. It stands to reason that, in an in-person survey, the respondent might feel like giving less critical and thus less accurate responses. However, I chose to proceed with this method, both because the advantages of administering the survey in person were considerable, and because respondents were aware that the nature of the research design implied in any case that evaluation reports would be matched with corresponding surveys, hence precluding true anonymity.

While proceeding with in-person administration of surveys, measures were taken to minimize the shortcomings of the approach as much as possible. The strategy was to build trust by reminding the respondents that the survey results would be confidential and that the responses obtained would be merged with a pool of identical

data without making any connection to names and implementing agencies. The survey questionnaire was only marked with a code for the corresponding evaluation report, without recording any reference to the respondent.

Kimmel (1988, p.97) argues that promises of confidentiality of the data collected do pay off, while overt characteristics of the interviewer (Burgess 1997, p.105), including similar personal experience, 'create an impression of the interviewer' and 'give access to views that would have been otherwise highly unlikely'.

Indeed, having conducted the first several surveys and consequent semi-structured interviews, it became clear that concerns over possible unwillingness of respondents to voice criticism were unfounded. Respondents perceived me as a colleague, experienced and knowledgeable of possible pitfalls in implementing an aid project in a setting like Afghanistan. Conversations were quite open and informal, with respondents eagerly discussing experiences of past projects, expected and unexpected complications they came across, and how they have learned from these past experiences.

Semi-structured Interviews

After completing the survey, select (87 out of 124) respondents participated in a brief semi-structured interview. Reconstruction and development practitioners of various seniority levels were invited to speak in more detail about their experience in dealing with the factors that they believed were important for project success. Referring back to the questionnaire, open-ended questions were asked pertaining to the complications and

hindrances they had dealt with working on a particular project, and how they had overcome those. As Burges (1997, p.103) describes, respondents were indeed enthusiastic to discuss issues about most of which no one had asked them before. When talking about less successful projects, and touching upon the possibility of corruption in project operations, caution was taken to ask the questions in a manner that would not trigger defensive, subjective responses¹⁶⁸ (King et al. 1994, p.112).

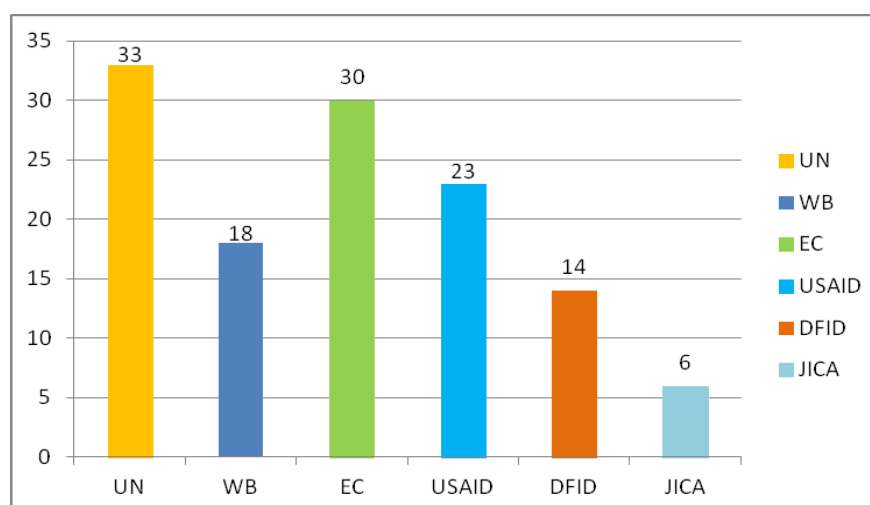
One of the follow-up questions of the semi-structured interviews focused particularly on the perceived importance of national government's support to project ideas and goals. Within the discussion on various components that comprise national government's support, or influence its quality, the questions pertaining to cultural factors, as well as possible instances of corruption within both the national counterpart agency team and international project implementation team were raised in a delicate manner¹⁶⁹.

Out of 174 collected evaluation reports, 124 (71.2%) were matched with a corresponding survey, resulting in an overall set of 124 projects included in this study (Figure 5.9.1). 87 semi-structured interviews with development practitioners in Afghanistan were conducted to compliment the quantitative results with real life experiences. The accounts of the semi-structured interviews were also coded to reflect on additional major points arising from these interviews (Annex 7).

¹⁶⁸ King, Keohane, Verbena (1994) give a good example of how to pose delicate questions in a survey.

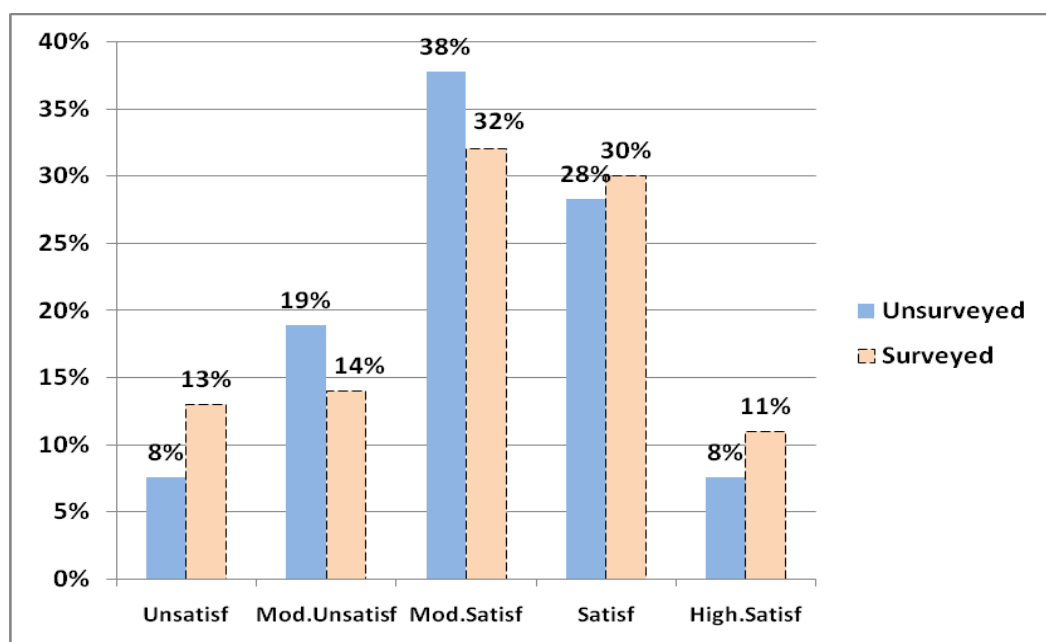
¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Figure 5.9.1 – Projects by six major agencies included in the dataset



The set of data on each particular project thus included an evaluation report, a questionnaire survey, and for most of the projects, a semi-structured interview.

The remaining 50 projects for which an evaluation report was available but the right respondent could not be located (there were 45 such projects) or where the respondent did not return the survey (there were 5 such projects) introduce an element of ‘non-response error’ into the study. The two sets of projects – those for which a survey was carried out, and those for which it was not – show very similar distributions of the dependent variable of success. There is therefore no immediate indication of non-response error (Table 5.10). This finding indicates that the results of this study of project effectiveness should be fairly generalizeable to all reconstruction and development projects *implemented and evaluated* in Afghanistan within the set time-frame.

Table 5.10 – Comparison of surveyed and un-surveyed projects by success ranking

Another way to gauge the external validity of this study is to compare the composition of project sectors in the data set to all of the projects in the Development Assistance Database for Afghanistan (DAD)¹⁷⁰. The aim here is to assess the extent to which the sample of projects used for the analysis is representative of the sector ratio in the overall population of projects undertaken in Afghanistan within the same period of time.

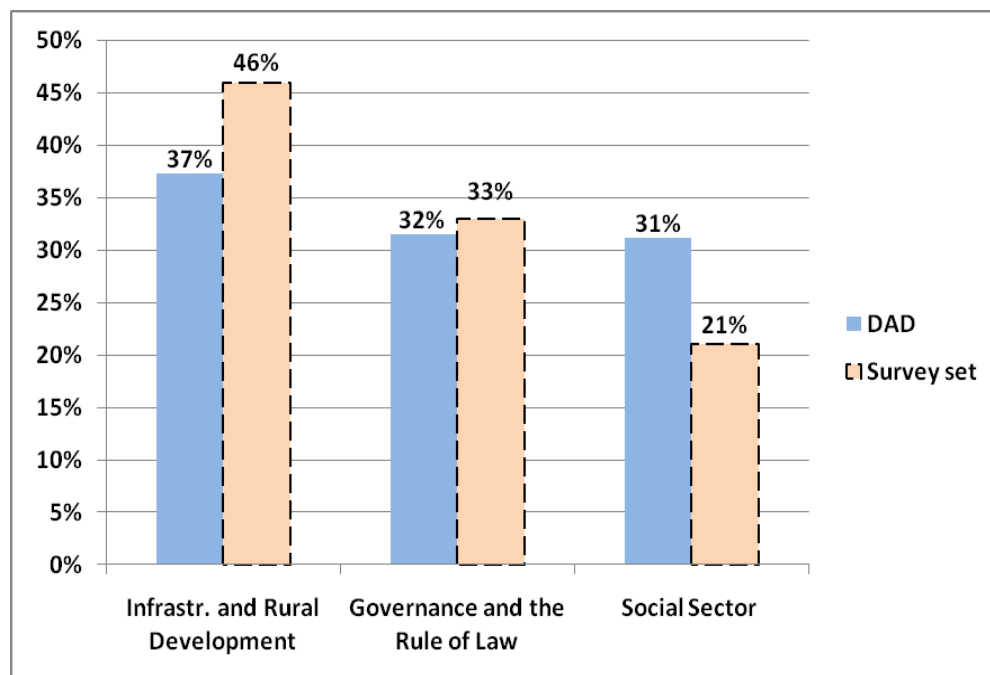
Categorized into three major thematic sectors - Infrastructure and Rural Development, Governance and the Rule of Law, and Social Sector - figures in Table 5.11 indicate a slightly disproportionate sampling (Babbie, 1998, p.225), with the projects in the IRD cluster somewhat overrepresented, and projects in the Social Sector cluster slightly underrepresented in the survey sample. While the oversampling in IRD sector

¹⁷⁰ Development Assistance Database for Afghanistan (DAD) records 90 percent of all the assistance provided to Afghanistan since late 2001 (ODI 2006). The database can be accessed at: [http://dadafghanistan.gov.af/dad/Documents/help/Application/ENG/LOGGING INTO DAD AFGHANIS TAN.htm](http://dadafghanistan.gov.af/dad/Documents/help/Application/ENG/LOGGING%20INTO%20DAD%20AFGHANISTAN.htm)

allows us to have a greater number of projects to analyze and offers a greater variation in success rankings, the most plausible explanation to under-sampling in the Social Sector category is that there might have been fewer evaluated projects in this sector to begin with.

Overall, however, the projects in the survey sample are comparable to the set of projects as in DAD, which bodes well for the external validity of this study.

Table 5.11 - Comparison of Sector shares in the Data set and in the Afghanistan Development Assistance Database (DAD)



In this chapter, I have discussed the parameters of the study, the methodology of data collection, and the statistical methods to be used in analyzing it. Before presenting an analysis and interpretation of the data, the next chapter will explain the operational definitions used to collect data on project success factors, the composition of the

questions in the questionnaire to yield as detailed information as possible, and descriptive statistics on responses.

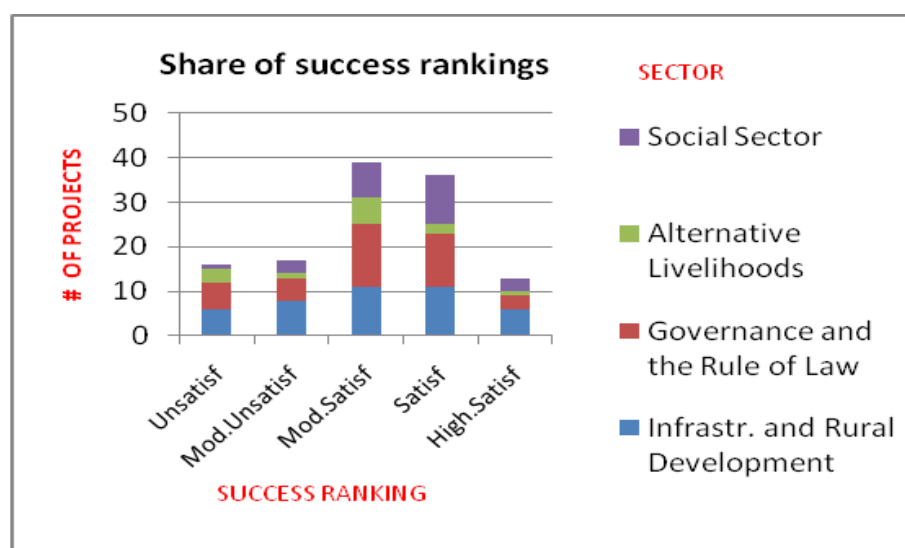
CHAPTER VI

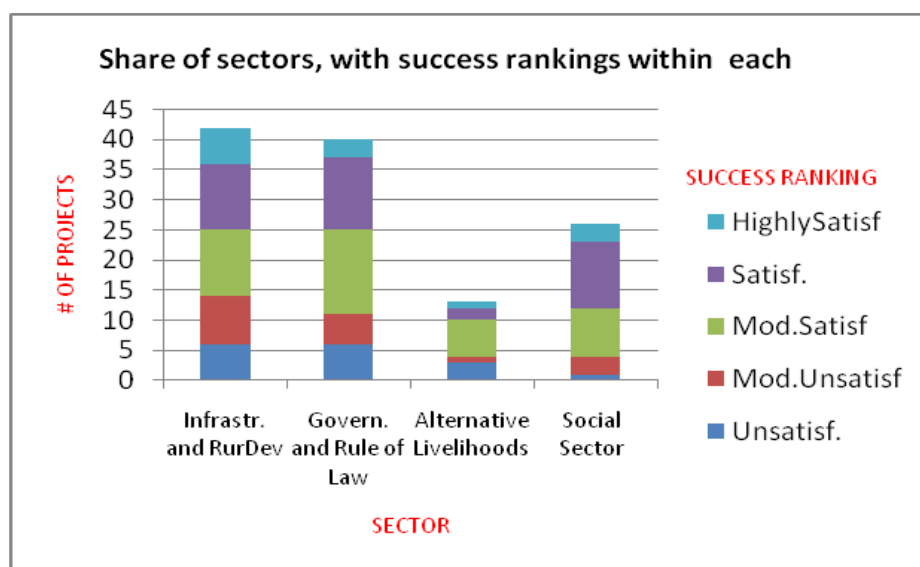
Data Composition and Quality

This chapter presents the survey data that was collected for this study of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development, and describes the quality and composition of the data that is used in further statistical analysis. The operational definitions of independent and control variables are presented, along with the descriptive statistics and frequencies for dependent and independent variables.

The archival research and evaluation reports collected in Afghanistan during August 2008 – July 2009, and the survey work conducted during September – December 2009 yielded 174 evaluation reports, for 124 of which a corresponding survey has been completed, thus resulting in an overall sample size of 124 projects. Figure 6 presents some descriptive statistics.

Figure 6 – Descriptive statistics of the data set, by success ranking and sector





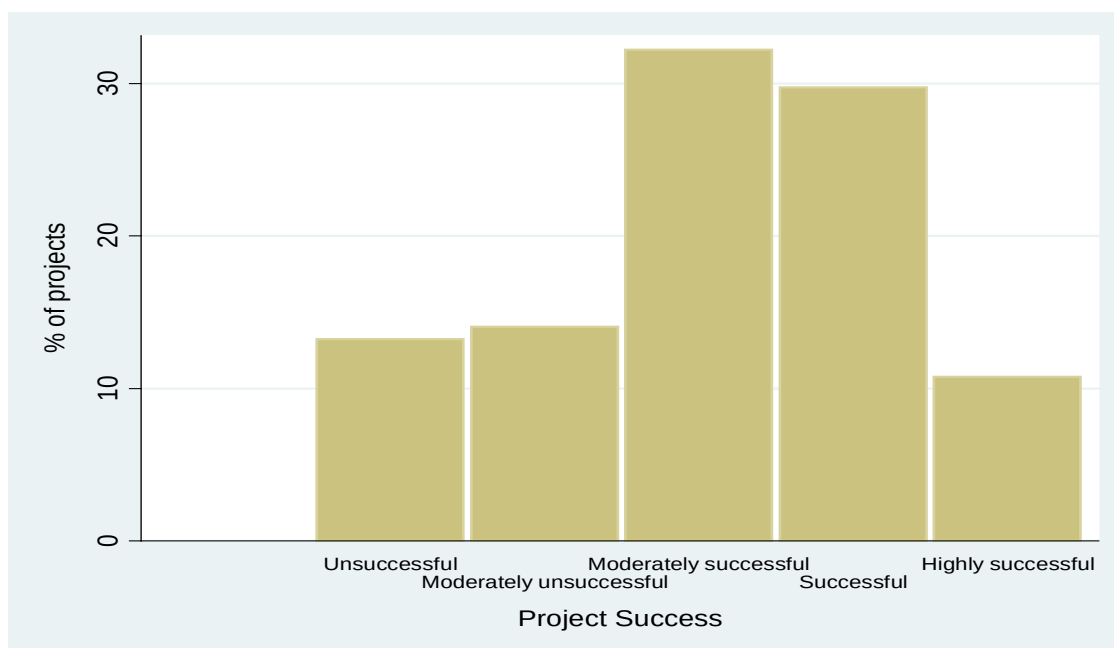
6.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the model is project effectiveness (Y). Projects were ranked into five success categories of ‘Highly Successful’, ‘Successful’, ‘Moderately Successful’, ‘Moderately Unsuccessful’, and ‘Unsuccessful’, based on the rating in respective project evaluation reports. (5 = Highly Successful, 4 = Successful, 3 = Moderately Successful, 2 = Moderately Unsuccessful, and 1 = Unsuccessful)

The descriptive statistics and frequencies for project effectiveness indicators are presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 respectively. The indicator has a mean of 3.10, with standard deviation of 1.18. The cumulative share of projects in ‘unsuccessful’ and ‘moderately unsuccessful’ categories is 40 percent, which provides a sufficient variation in project success rankings to analyze.

Table 6.1 – Descriptive Statistics for Project Success Ranking Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Succ. Ranking	124	3.107438	1.181818	1	5

Graph 6.2 – Frequencies for Project Success Rankings Indicators

Success rankings for 28 projects, for which no numeric ranking was presented in respective evaluation report, was based on latent content analysis by two independent coders, using a coding manual attached in Annex 3. For nine out of 28 projects, coders gave different success ranking (Annex 5), but rankings were never more than one category apart.

Two commonly used statistical methods to test inter-coder reliability¹⁷¹, Cohen's kappa coefficient¹⁷² and the Spearman rank-correlation (Myers et al. 2003, p.508), were applied to assess whether the distributions of success rankings from the two coders were significantly different from each other. The Spearman correlation was 0.9, and Cohen's kappa 0.58. Both strongly reject the hypothesis that the distributions were different

¹⁷¹ A measure of the agreement between independent coders evaluating certain characteristics (Lombard, Synder-Duch, & Bracken 2002, p.589).

¹⁷² Cohen's kappa coefficient takes into account the agreement occurring by chance (Gwet 2010).

with >99% confidence. We can therefore conclude that the coding pattern between two coders was highly consistent, and infer that the coding scheme applied provided a clear and consistent framework for success rankings and could be independently replicated.

Graph 6.2a – Cohen’s kappa coefficient

Agreement	Expected Agreement	Kappa	Std. Err.	Z	Prob>Z
67.86%	23.60%	0.5793	0.1006	5.76	0.0000

6.2 Independent Variables

National Government’s Support (X1)

In order to reflect objectively on the degree of national government’s support from all levels of national authorities involved, the following four ordinal-level indicators¹⁷³ were included in the survey to measure the level of national government’s support (X1) (question 5 on survey instrument):

- How committed and supportive has each of the following national groups or individuals been of your project objectives and initiatives? (3 = Very supportive, 2 = Moderately supportive, 1 = Not very supportive, 0 = Not at all supportive).
1. High-level officials in the Government
 2. Top management of the national partner agency (or agencies)

¹⁷³ As per conventions in the literature, see for instance Israel (1987)

3. Lower-level management at the national partner agency (or agencies)
4. Personnel of the national partner agency (or agencies)

Table 6.3 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.4 the frequencies for national government's support indicators. The indicator has a mean of 2.33, with a standard deviation of 0.69.

The missing values for indicators of national government's support were recorded as the mean score. The frequencies show that all four indicators have over 80 percent of responses in either 'very supportive' or 'moderately supportive' category. The overall level of assessment of the national government's support is therefore high, indicating the possibility of some degree of social desirability bias¹⁷⁴ (McBurney 1994) in the responses on this independent variable¹⁷⁵.

Table 6.3 – Descriptive Statistics for National Government's Support Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Nat.Support	118	2.338983	.6945495	0	3

Table 6.4 – Frequencies for National Government's Support Indicators

	0	1	2	3	missing
High Level Govt. Officials	1	12	51	54	3
Nat. Agency's Top Management	0	19	41	61	0
Nat. Agency's Lower-level Management	1	17	54	48	1
Nat. Agency's Staff	0	15	64	41	1

¹⁷⁴ Social desirability bias is a tendency of respondents to reply in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. This will generally take the form of over-reporting good behavior or underreporting bad behavior.

¹⁷⁵ Alternatively, it might indicate that government officials always expressed support whether they were sincere or not.

Donor Coordination in the field (X 2) – Intensity and Impact

The intensity of donor coordination exercise on the ground (X2) was measured using the following four ordinal-level indicators (question 7 on survey instrument):

- How frequently did you or other project staff members engage in each of the following activities with the staff members of other aid agencies and NGOs in order to coordinate and collaborate with other agencies in the country for the implementation of this project? (3 = About once a week, 2 = About once a month or more, 1 = Only a few times a year, 0 = Never)
1. Official face-to-face meetings
 2. Casual face-to-face meetings
 3. Phone conversations
 4. Written communications

Table 6.5 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.6 shows the frequencies for donor coordination intensity indicators. The indicator has a mean of 1.88, with standard deviation of 0.63. The missing values for indicators of donor coordination intensity were recorded as the mean score. With 50 percent of respondents having indicated that ‘official face to face meetings’ took place only a few times a year, and almost 48 percent of respondents indicating that ‘phone conversations’ and ‘written communication’ took place about once a month, donor coordination intensity can be interpreted as low.

Table 6.5 – Descriptive Statistics for Donor Coordination Intensity Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Donor coord.	124	1.883609	.6397771	.25	3

Table 6.6 – Frequencies for Donor Coordination Intensity Indicators

	0	1	2	3	missing
Official face-to-face mtgs	1	59	48	11	2
Casual face-to-face mtgs	17	34	48	18	4
Phone conversations	5	20	57	35	4
Written communications	1	16	57	45	2

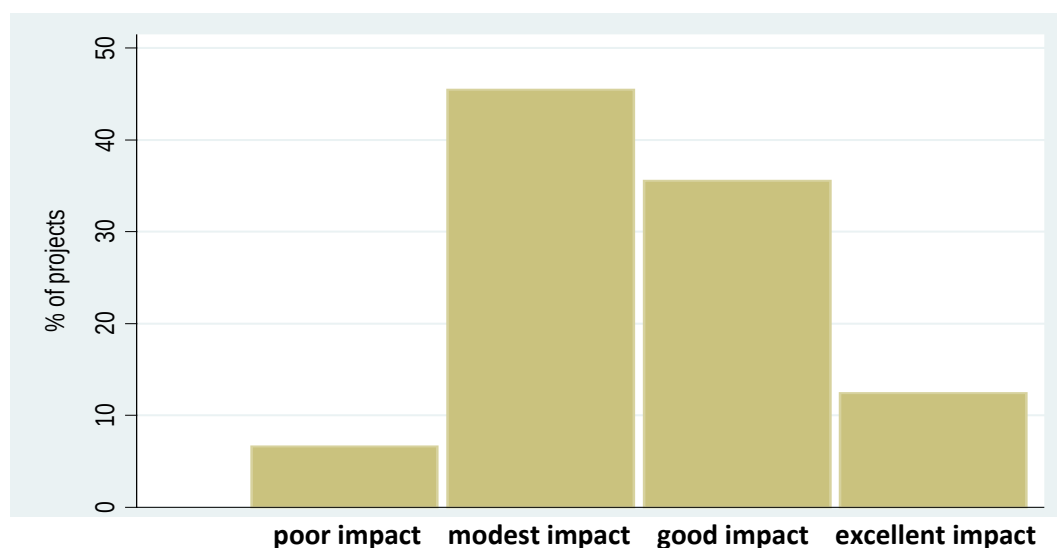
The impact of donor coordination in the field was measured using the following ordinal-level indicator (question 9 on the survey instrument):

- How do you evaluate the impact of your coordination and collaboration with other agencies in the country for the purpose of this project? (3 = Substantial impact, 2 = Good impact, 1 = Modest impact, 0 = Poor impact)

Tables 6.7 and 6.8 present descriptive statistics and frequencies for donor coordination impact indicators respectively. The indicator has a mean of 1.53, with standard deviation of 0.79. The distribution of frequencies for donor coordination impact responses is roughly symmetric, with approximately 52 percent of responses in ‘excellent’ and ‘good’ impact categories, and approximately 48 percent of responses in ‘modest’ and ‘poor’ impact categories.

Table 6.7 – Descriptive Statistics for Donor Coordination Impact Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Coord. Impact	124	1.53719	.796255	0	3

Graph 6.8 – Donor Coordination Impact Indicators

Project Leadership (X 3)

The following six ordinal-level indicators were used to measure the quality of project leadership (X3) (question 11 on survey instrument):

- Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:(to be answered by the staff member or manager familiar with project leader's performance) (4 = Strongly agree, 3 = Somewhat agree, 2 = Neither agree nor disagree, 1 = Somewhat disagree, 0 = Strongly disagree)
1. The project leader possessed adequate technical skills
 2. The project leader possessed adequate administrative skills
 3. The project leader possessed adequate interpersonal skills

4. The project leader was actively involved in the project team
5. The project leader had the ability to motivate team members and maintain a cohesive project team
6. The projects leader was not hesitant and was able to enlist the aid of personnel not involved in the project in the event of problems

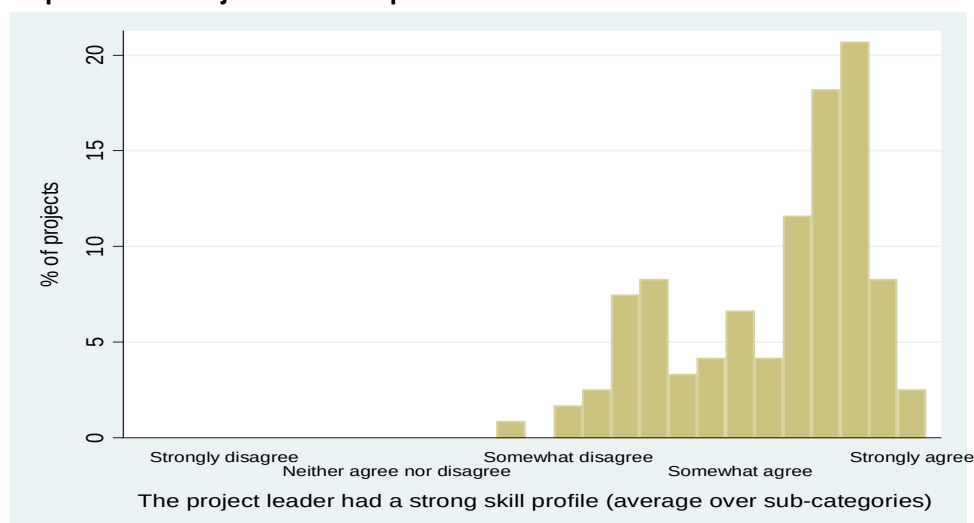
Tables 6.9 and 6.10 present descriptive statistics and frequencies for project leadership indicators respectively. The indicator has a mean of 3.2, with a standard deviation of 0.54. The missing value for one of the indicators of project leadership was recorded as the mean score. All six indicators have distributions that are negatively skewed, with frequencies showing that on all six indicators 70 percent or more of respondents ‘somewhat’ or ‘strongly’ agreed with the statements of project leadership adequate quality. Thus, the level of project leadership among observed cases is fairly high.

Table 6.9 – Descriptive Statistics for Project Leadership Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Proj. lead	124	3.210744	.5463552	1.666667	4

Graph 6.10 a – Frequencies for Project Leadership Indicators

	0	1	2	3	4	missing
Adequate technical skills	0	1	23	42	55	0
Adequate administrative skills	1	4	31	58	27	0
Adeq. interpersonal skills	0	1	13	65	42	0
Actively involved with team	0	0	14	43	65	0
Able to motivate	0	0	21	45	55	0
Able to enlist additional help	0	2	21	46	51	1

Graph 6.10b – Project Leadership Indicators

Complexity (X4)

Project complexity (X4) was measured based on the percentile composition of project activities in the areas of ‘institution/capacity building’, ‘construction’, ‘social services’, ‘legal and judicial aid’ as stated in respective evaluation reports. The literature suggests that institution/capacity building¹⁷⁶ initiatives are inherently more complex in nature and their implementation requires a good degree of personal judgment and expertise. These types of tasks are harder to perform in comparison with clear-cut technical activities (Israel 1987). Therefore, projects in our set that have a greater share of institution/capacity building component were considered as more complex.

¹⁷⁶ Capacity building initiatives provide ‘activities, approaches, strategies, and methodologies which help organizations, groups and individuals to improve their performance, generate development benefits, and achieve their objectives over time’. Three dimensions of capacity building cover Human capacity, Organizational capacity, and Institutional capacity. Capacity development tools include technical assistance of experts, training, and studies and equipment (WB 2005c).

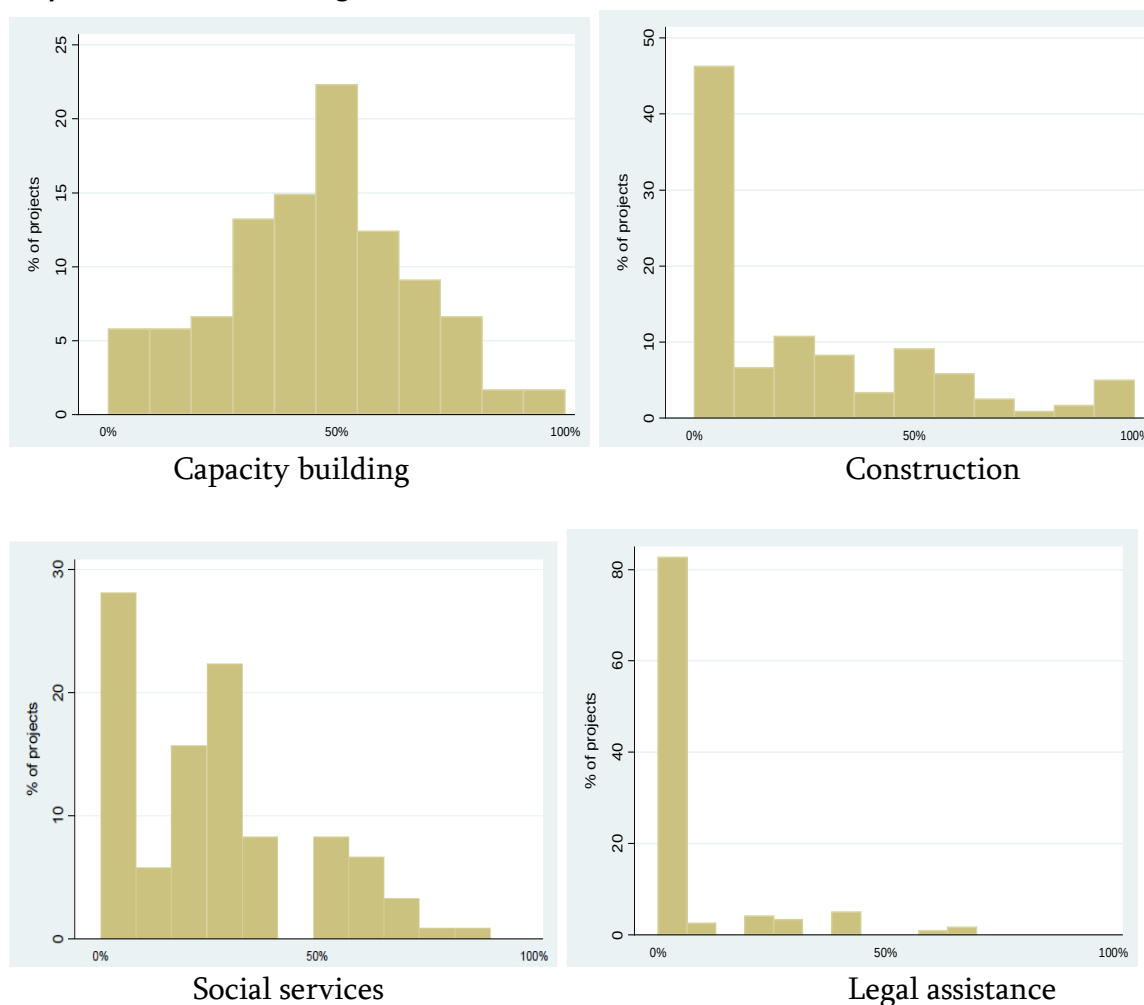
Table 6.15 and 6.16 present descriptive statistics and frequencies for complexity indicators respectively. The indicator for institution/capacity building component has a mean of 45.1 percent of the total project budget. The percentage share of institution/capacity building activities within projects observed is evenly distributed: of the total number of cases, 31 percent of projects fall within the 0-30% category, 37 percent of projects are in the 31- 40 % category, and 32 percent of the projects have 50 to 100 percent of capacity/institution building share of project activities. The share of other types of project activities is shown in Graph 6.16a.

Table 6.15 – Descriptive Statistics for Project Complexity Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
budget_cb (%)	124	45.16529	22.68382	0	100
budget_const(%)	124	23.42975	29.45359	0	100
budget_ss (%)	124	25.45455	21.89939	0	90
budget_leg(%)	124	5.702479	14.42373	0	70

Table 6.16 – Frequencies for Project Complexity Indicators

	0%	10%	15%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%
CB	7	6	1	8	16	18	27	15	1	10	1	7	2	2
Contr	56	8		13	10	4	11	7		3	1	1	1	6
SS	34	7		19	27	10	10	8		4		1	1	
LA	100	3		5	4	6		1		2				

Graph 6.16a – Share of budget intended for:

Coverage area (X5)

The area covered by project activities (X5) was measured using the following open-ended question in the survey (question 3 on the survey instrument):

- Which city or province(s) did the project activity cover?

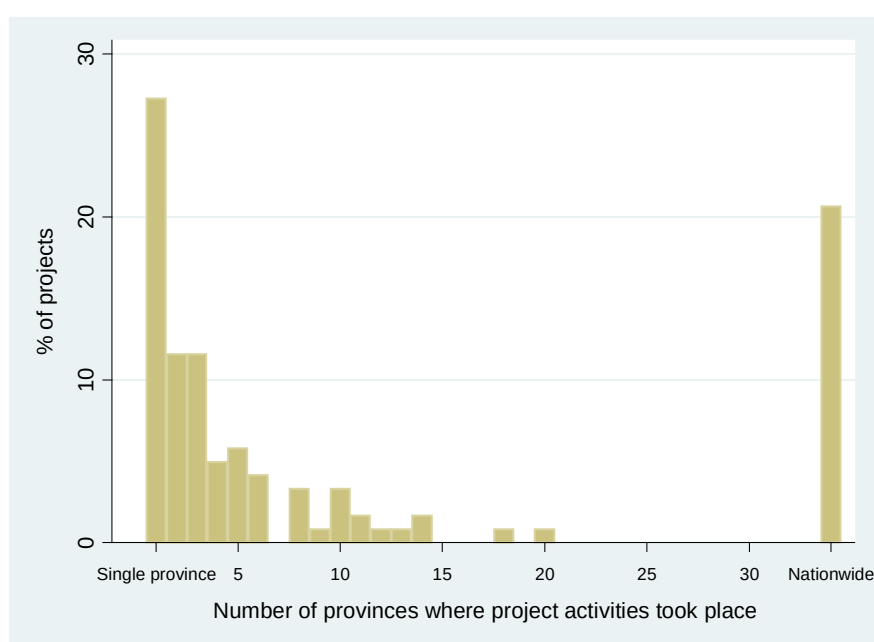
The indicator is calculated based on the number of provinces that were covered by project activities. Graphs 6.17 and 6.18 present descriptive statistics and frequencies for coverage area indicators respectively. The indicator has a mean of 10 provinces, with a

standard deviation of 12. The frequencies show that almost 30 percent of projects covered a single province, with about 60 percent of the projects covering between 1 to 5 provinces. A little over 21 percent of projects were country-wide projects.

Table 6.17 – Descriptive Statistics for Coverage Area Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
# of provinces	124	10.21488	12.6979	1	34

Table 6.18 – Frequencies for Coverage Area Indicators



Budget (X6)

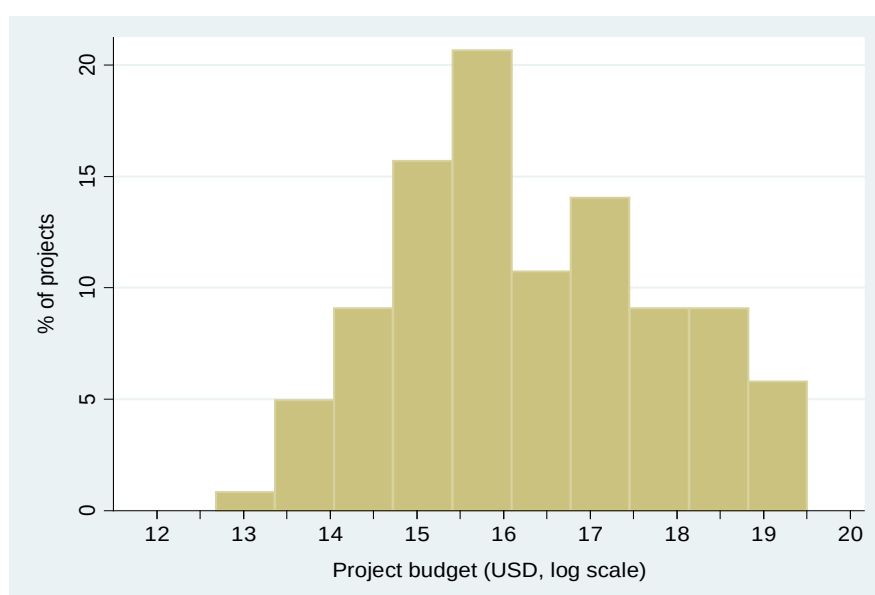
The size of the project budget (X6) was measured in US dollars, based on indications of budget size in respective evaluation reports, and were grouped into ten logarithm interval groups. Table 6.19 shows descriptive statistics and graph 6.20 the frequencies

for budget indicators respectively. The minimum budget among the projects observed was 400,000 US dollars, the maximum 296 million US dollars. The mean of the budgets observed was 31 million US dollars, with a standard deviation of 48 million US dollars.

Table 6.19 – Descriptive Statistics for Budget Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Budget	124	3.13e+07	4.86e+07	400000	2.96e+08

Table 6.20 – Size of Project Budgets



Duration (X7)

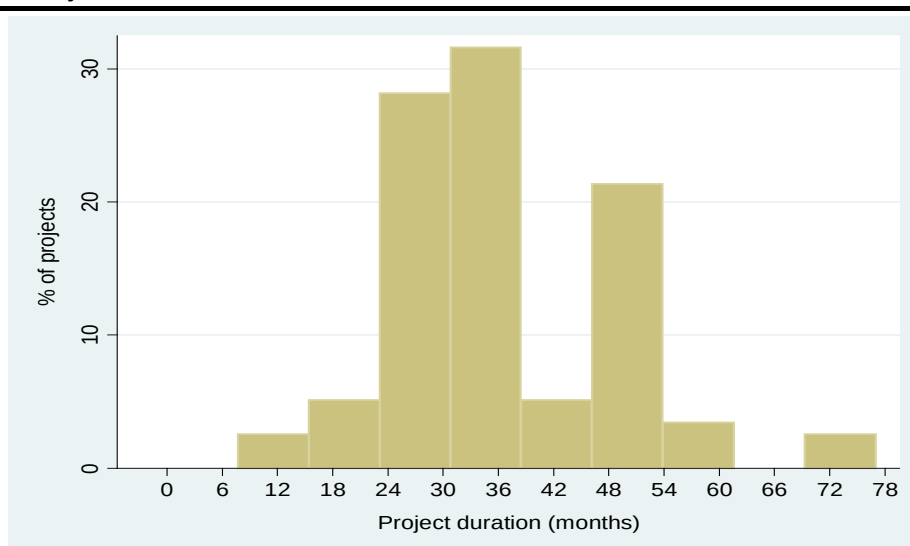
Project duration (X7) was measured in months, based on indications in respective evaluation reports. Table 6.21 and 6.22 present descriptive statistics and frequencies for project duration indicators respectively. The indicator has a mean of 36 month, with a standard deviation of 12. The minimum length of projects observed was 12 month, the

maximum length was 77 months. The missing values for indicators of duration were recorded as the mean score.

Table 6.21 – Descriptive Statistics for Duration Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Duration	117	36.41026	12.1713	12	77

Table 6.22 – Project Duration



Adequate Personnel (X8)

The following four ordinal – level indicators were developed to measure how adequate the project personnel (X8) were. (question 12 on survey instrument):

- Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (4 = Strongly agree, 3 = Somewhat agree, 2 = Neither agree nor disagree, 1 = Somewhat disagree, 0 = Strongly disagree)
1. There was a sufficient number of staff to complete the project

2. Project staff possessed adequate technical skills
3. The project staff possessed adequate administrative skills
4. Project staff understood their role on the project team

Table 6.13 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.14 the frequencies for personnel indicators. The indicator's mean was 2.9, with a standard deviation of 0.73. The distribution of all four indicators was negatively skewed, with observed cases scoring high on the quality of project personnel indicators.

Table 6.13 – Descriptive Statistics for Adequate Personnel Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Adeq. Personnel	124	2.904959	.7319041	1	4

Table 6.14 – Frequencies for Adequate Personnel Indicators

	0	1	2	3	4	Missing
Sufficient number of staff	12	22	17	46	24	0
Adequate technical skills	2	9	26	49	35	0
Adequate administrative skills	0	4	21	61	35	0
Staff understood their role	0	1	15	52	53	0

Monitoring and Evaluation (X9)

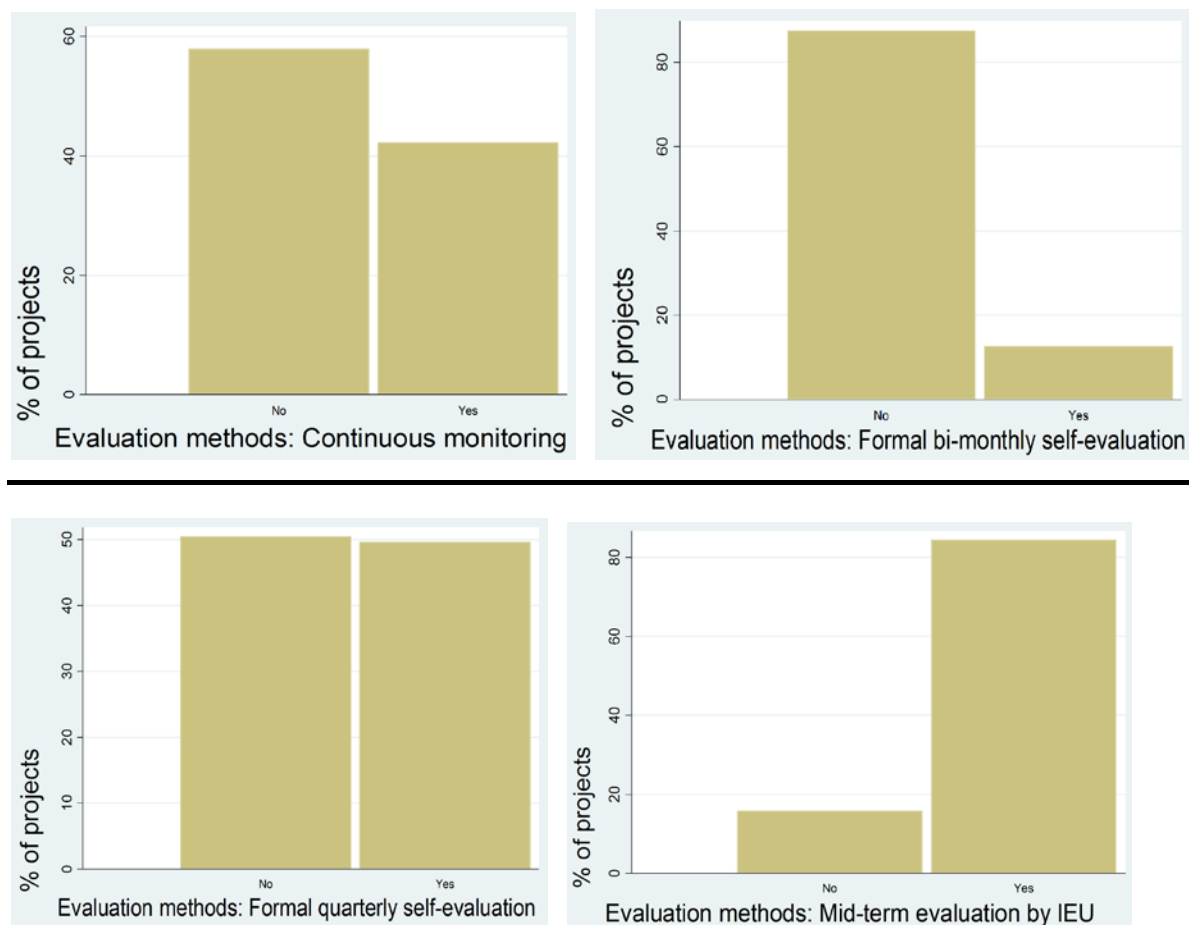
To measure the scope of monitoring and evaluation (X9), respondents were asked dichotomous questions on the following list of monitoring and evaluation components (question 10 on survey instrument):

- Did you use any of the following monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the quality of your project implementation? (1 = Yes, 0 = No)
1. Continuous monitoring
 2. Formal bi-monthly self-evaluation
 3. Formal quarterly self-evaluation
 4. Mid-term evaluation by IEU
 5. Other (please specify)

Table 6.11 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.12 the frequencies for monitoring and evaluation indicators. The indicator has a mean of 0.43, with a standard deviation of 0.26. The frequencies for ‘continuous monitoring’, ‘formal bi-monthly self-evaluation’, and ‘formal quarterly self-evaluation’ show that *self* monitoring/evaluation practices were used very seldom, whereas official ‘mid-term evaluations by an Independent Evaluation Unit’ took place in 84 percent of the cases included in the study.

Table 6.11 – Descriptive Statistics for Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
M&E	124	.4376033	.2644397	0	1.2

Table 6.12 – Frequencies for Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators

Rest and Recuperation (X10)

The influence of the Rest and Recuperation (X10) practice on project implementation success was measured using the following ordinal-level question in the survey (question 14 on the survey instrument):

- To what extent you believe the Rest and Recuperation leaves of project staff, including yourself, affected the quality and timely implementation of project objectives? (3 = Affected substantially, 2 = Affected moderately, 1 = Affected minimally, 0 = Did not affect)

Table 6.25 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.26 the frequencies for rest and recuperation indicators. The indicator has a mean of 1.24, with a standard deviation of 0.96. 40 percent of respondents said R&R leaves affected project implementation only ‘minimally’, a cumulative 36 percent said it affected project implementation ‘moderately’ or ‘substantially’, and about 25 percent indicated R&R ‘did not affect’ project implementation.

Table 6.25 – Descriptive Statistics for Rest and Recuperation Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
R&R	115	1.243478	.9696382	0	3

Table 6.26 – Frequencies for R&R Indicators

	0	1	2	3	Missing
R&R Impact	28	46	26	15	6

PRT assistance (X11)

The influence of the assistance received from the Provincial Reconstruction Team (X11) on project implementation success was measured using the following dichotomous question in the survey (question 15 on the survey instrument):

- Did you request the assistance from a Provincial Reconstruction Team for the purpose of your project implementation? (1 = Yes, 0 = No)

Open-ended questions were included to verify how often such assistance was requested and for what purpose. An additional ordinal-level question aimed to assess the level of

satisfaction with the assistance received from a PRT (2 = Very satisfied, 1 = Moderately satisfied, 0 = Not satisfied).

Table 6.23 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.24 the frequencies for PRT assistance indicators. The indicator's mean is 0.14, with a standard deviation of 0.35, with three missing values. Only 14 percent of all responses said they requested PRT assistance for the purpose of project implementation.

Table 6.23 – Descriptive Statistics for PRT Assistance Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
PRT assistance	118	.1440678	.3526559	0	1

Table 6.24 – Frequencies for PRT Assistance Indicators

	1	0	Missing
PRT assistance request	17	101	3

Economic Situation - Household Income (Z1)

The relation between economic situation (Z1) in the area of project implementation and project success was measured using the data from UNODC 2008 Afghanistan Annual Opium Survey (UNODC 2008a, p.28). An average estimate of annual household income in six regions of Afghanistan was calculated (Table 6.27 and 6.28) and used as an indicator of average household income for a provinces within a certain region. For projects that covered multiple provinces, an average of incomes in all provinces involved was calculated and recorded.

Table 6.27 – Average annual household income by region in 2007

Region	Average annual household income in 2007 (US\$)
Central	2515
Eastern	1785
North-eastern	2130
Northern	2066
Southern	4788
Western	2584
Country	3712

Source: author, based on UNODC 2008 Afghanistan Annual Opium Survey (Vienna, 2008a) data ¹⁷⁷

Figure 6.28 – Afghanistan maps, by region and province

¹⁷⁷ Different size and distribution of households in the sample for the original UNODC 2008 survey should be taken into account in interpreting and using the data.



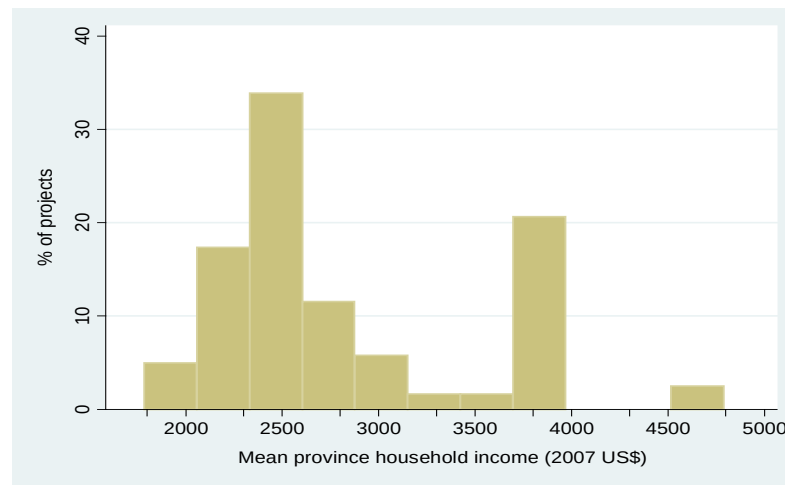
Source: NATO, 2010

Table 6.29 and 6.30 present descriptive statistics and frequencies for economic situation indicators respectively. The indicator has a mean of 2804 US dollars, with a standard deviation of 659. The minimum average annual household income indicator was 1785 US dollars, the maximum - 4788 US dollars. Higher average household incomes in Southern provinces (with less government control and higher degrees of insecurity) are most likely driven by the income from flourishing illicit opium production in this region.¹⁷⁸

Table 6.29 – Descriptive Statistics for Economic Situation Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
hh income	124	2804.05	659.2096	1785	4788

¹⁷⁸ UNODC Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2008.

Table 6.30 – Frequencies for Economic Indicators – Level

Security Situation (Z2)

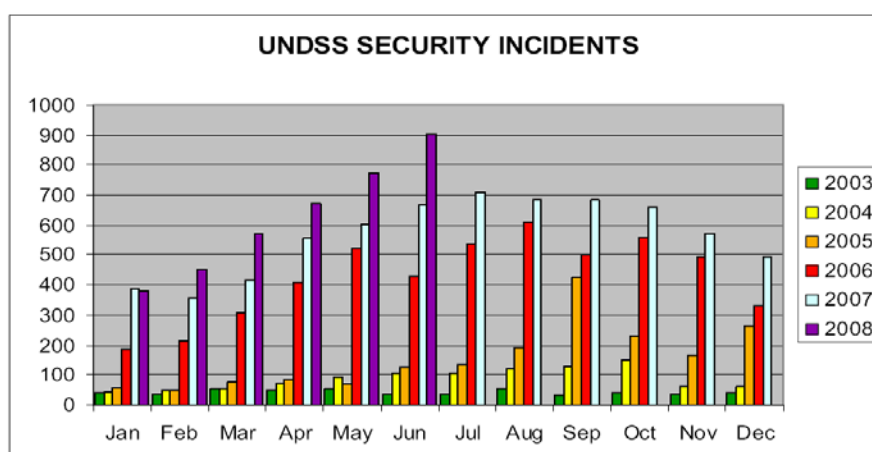
The impact of security situation (Z2) on project success was measured using the following ordinal-level indicator (question 18 on the survey instrument):

- To what extent do you believe the security conditions in the area of project implementation affected the success of the project? (3 = Affected substantially, 2 = Affected moderately, 1 = Affected minimally, 0 = Did not affect)

Graph 6.31 presents an overview of security situation in Afghanistan during 2003 – 2008. Table 6.32 presents descriptive statistics and table 6.33 the frequencies for security situation indicators. The indicator has a mean of 1.75, with a standard deviation of 0.94. The distribution of responses is negatively skewed, with about 46 percent of respondents indicating that security situation ‘moderately affected’ project implementation, 20 percent indicating it ‘minimally affected’ project implementation,

and 22 percent responding that security situation ‘affected substantially’ the successful project implementation.

Graph 6.31 – Number of security incidents by month, January 2003 – June 2008



Source: UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), Kabul, 2008

Table 6.32 – Descriptive Statistics for Security Situation Indicators

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Security Sit.	124	1.752066	.9423463	0	3

Table 6.33 – Frequencies for Security Situation Indicators

	0	1	2	3	Missing
Security affect	16	24	55	26	0

6.3 Control Variables for Respondent Characteristics (A)

Since most of the data that is used in this study was collected through a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews, it is important to verify to what extent the

feedback received from survey respondents is as objective as possible and is not distorted by respondents individual characteristics¹⁷⁹ (Babbie 1998, p.280, Gilovich et al. 2002, Hoorens 1993).

The following two variables for respondent's personal characteristics that might influence the objectivity of their responses were therefore included in the analysis: the respondent's position/authority within the project in question, and whether the respondent is a national or international staff member. The two variables were measured by requesting survey respondents to indicate their position within the project for which they were taking the survey (question 3 on survey instrument):

- What was your position in relation to the project?

Respondents were classified into National / International staff members (0 = National, 1 = International), and the level of authority groups of Lower Mid and High level authority (1 = Low-level, 2 = Mid-level, 3 = high-level staff).

The descriptive statistics for these two indicators are presented in Table 4.34, and the frequencies in table 6.35 and 6.36. The indicator of the level of authority has a mean of 2.2, with a standard deviation of 0.69. The distribution is negatively skewed, with about 58 percent of respondents being mid-level personnel, and 38 percent of respondents – high-level managerial staff members.

The distribution of national and international staff members is 40 percent to 60 percent respectively.

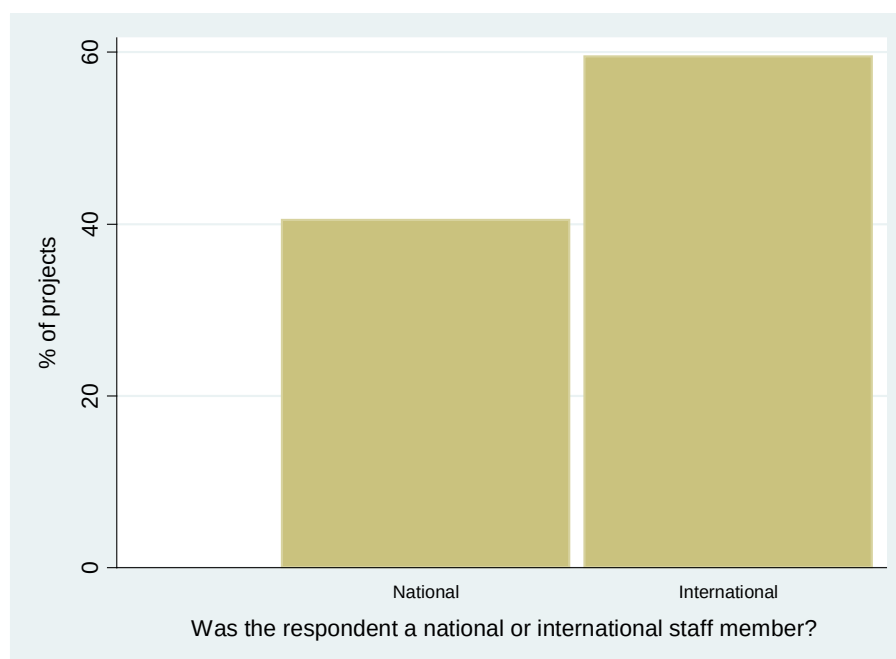
¹⁷⁹ For instance, cognitive bias may affect the results of a statistical survey if respondents answers to questions are influenced by their individual characteristics and related cognitive factors.

Table 6.34 – Descriptive Statistics for Respondent Characteristics Indicators

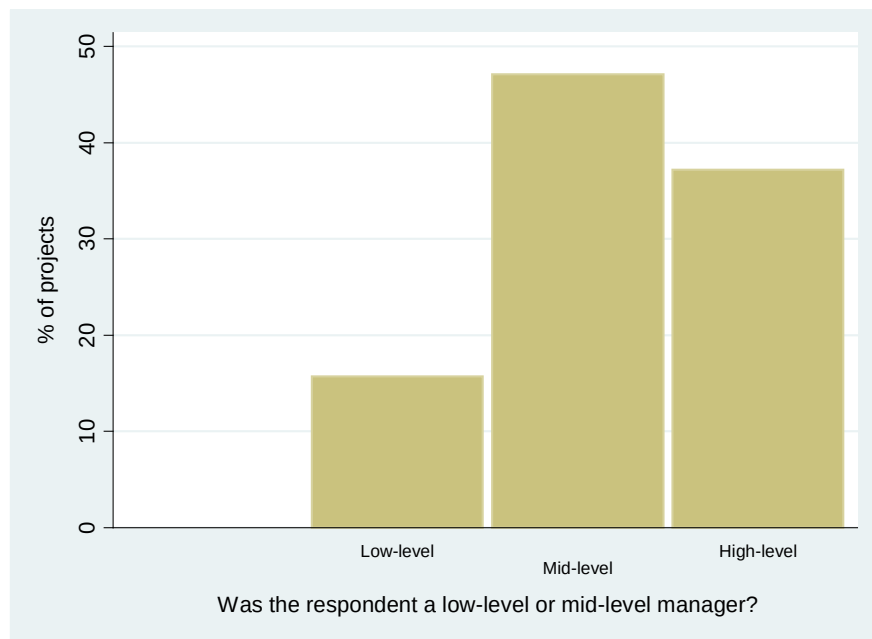
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Nat./Internat.staff	124	.5950413	.4929252	0	1
Level	124	2.214876	.697694	1	3

Table 6.35 – Frequencies for Respondent Characteristics Indicators – Nat/Int. Staff

	0	1	Missing
Nat./Internat. staff member	49	72	0

**Table 6.36 – Frequencies for Respondent Characteristics Indicators – Level**

	1	2	3	Missing
Level of authority	19	57	45	0



This chapter outlined the composition and quality of the statistical data on which this study relies. I describe the operational definitions used to collect data on project success factors, the composition of the questions in the survey questionnaire to yield as detailed information as possible, and descriptive statistics on responses.

CHAPTER VII

Major Empirical Findings

This chapter presents what I believe are the most important and interesting findings of the study, pertaining to the factors of the national government's support, project leadership, and donor coordination. The results for the remaining factors comprising the explanatory model of project success are presented in the following chapter. Quantitative data analysis results are complemented with qualitative feedback collected during semi-structured interviews and, where possible, with the results of these interviews' coding and analysis.

The influence of project success factors on project success was analyzed using chi-square tests¹⁸⁰, as well as linear¹⁸¹ (OLS), ordered probit¹⁸² and multinomial logit¹⁸³ (maximum likelihood) regressions. For linear regression analysis, the ranks of success were treated as continuous variables, for probit and logit regressions they were perhaps more appropriately treated as categorical.

Regression tests were conducted in three stages. First, a bivariate relationship between each project factor and project success was tested. Second, multivariate regressions tested the relationship between a particular project factor and project

¹⁸⁰ A nonparametric statistical test to determine whether the observed joint distribution of two variables differs from the frequencies expected if the two variables were independently distributed, using frequencies of nominal (categorical) or ordinal level data.

¹⁸¹ A test that estimates a linear relationship between two variables.

¹⁸² A test used to analyze predictor variables influence the likelihood that an ordinal dependent variable takes increasing values (this reduces to the familiar probit model if there are only two possible values).

¹⁸³ A test used to analyze how, for every possible value of a categorical dependent variable, predictor variables influence the likelihood that the dependent variable takes this value, rather than the most frequent value.

success, taking into account the weight and influence of other factors in the model. Finally, multivariate regressions analyzed the relationship of factors to project success taking into account other factors in the model *and* possible interaction between certain factors included in the explanatory model.

The summary results of the first tests - bivariate regression analysis - are shown in Table 7.1 and results of the third test - multivariate regression analysis *with interactions* - in Table 7.2. The results of the second test - multivariate regression without interactions - are very similar to the results of the third test, with minor change in coefficients and significance indicators, and are available as Annex 6.

Statistical analysis yielded interesting results on factors of the national government's support and project leadership, demonstrating that these factors play an important role in ensuring sound project outcomes. The positive correlation of these two variables with project success was statistically significant in all four types of statistical tests, in both bivariate and multivariate analyses. The results also point to the positive effect of factors such as monitoring and evaluation, and adequate personnel. I present and discuss these findings in detail in the following sections of this chapter.

On the other hand, the results of our analysis show that the variable of field donor coordination failed to achieve statistical significance in either bivariate or multivariate tests.

Three additional factors – monitoring and evaluation, adequate personnel, and rest and recuperation – yield consistent statistically significant results in bivariate

relationship tests. Their coefficients and significance level change when a different statistical technique is used to analyze the data (Table 7.1). The fact that these three variables have maintained positive coefficients but failed to reach statistical significance in the multivariate analyses could be a genuine effect of correcting for omitted variable bias. However, the sample size of our data set is relatively small for an in-depth multivariate analysis, and hence, loss of significance in the presence of stable coefficients may be due to a lack of power.¹⁸⁴ However, even in a context of potential power problems, two variables remained significant, providing robust statistical evidence of their correlation with project success. These variables are the national government's support and project leadership.

The advantage of an empirical analysis in which quantitative data is supported by qualitative information is that it allows some insight into causal relationship between variables even when the size of the dataset does not permit for a strict causal¹⁸⁵ interpretation of statistical tests. My quantitative analyses results establish correlation (or lack of such) between the dependent variable of project success and independent variables. Establishing *correlation*, i.e that the changes in one variable are associated with changes in another, is one of the three basic criteria for causality (Babbie 2009, p.90-93). The second criterion is *time order* (or sequence), according to which a causal relationship can exist only when cause precedes the effect in time. The logic of project implementation process also satisfies this criterion, with project implementation factors

¹⁸⁴ 'Power' refers to the probability that there are no false negatives in a hypothesis test, i.e., the probability that the hypothesis that an estimated coefficient is zero is rejected when the true coefficient is indeed different from zero.

¹⁸⁵ A relationship between variables where a change in one variable *necessarily* leads to a change in another variable.

preceding the project implementation end result. Finally, according to the third requirement of *nonspurious* relationship, the effect cannot be explained by a coincidental statistical correlation between two variables which was caused by a third variable. The insight of qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews helps satisfy this requirement by providing evidence on how certain implementation factors (and their components) do play a role in the effect, i.e the successful or less successful outcomes of projects, and that the correlation observed is not coincidental.

As a result, the quantitative findings help establish a general pattern, while qualitative findings provide further valuable details on the process, sequence and impact of certain factors on project success. Therefore, as I discuss findings on individual factors, and where appropriate, I argue for a causal connection between certain independent variables and the variable of project success.

Table 7.1 – Statistical tests of the bivariate relationship between project success and project implementation factors (variables)

	Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
Variable				Unsuccessful	Mod. Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT	37.658***	1.110***	1.135***	-2.015***	-1.434**	0.638*	2.508***
DONOR COORDINATION	11.908	-0.067	-0.042	0.841*	-0.502	-0.015	0.482
PROJECT LEADERSHIP	33.579***	0.965***	0.972***	-0.726	-0.581	.875***	2.438**
COMPLEXITY	15.529	-0.002	-0.002	-0.004	-0.007	0.0006	-0.023
COVERAGE	13.443	0.009	0.01	0.008	0.023	0.001	0.059**
BUDGET	11.809	4.4E-11	2.6E-10	9.5E-10	1.4E-09	-4.1E-09	5E-09
DURATION	4.303	0.003	0.003	0.032	0.036	0.014	0.067*
STAFF	24.010**	0.377**	0.355**	-0.447	0.132	0.388	1.00*
MONITORING and EVALUATION	32.554***	1.657***	1.593***	-2.820*	-4.158**	1.007	2.361**
REST and RECUPERATION	13.660*	-.248**	-0.211**	0.794**	0.362	0.057	0.090
PRTs	6.048	0.283	0.234	0.297	-0.603	1.147*	-0.315
ECON.SITUATION	15.3069	0.0002	0.0002	0.0004	-0.00003	-0.00008	0.0009**
SECURITY SITUATION	5.156	-0.016	-0.001	0.241	0.179	1.57	0.401
Relationship between Project Leadership and National Government's Support	15.748*	0.208**					
Relationship between Project Leadership and Monitoring and Evaluation	55.807***	0.260***					

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Table 7.2 - Statistical tests of multivariate relationship of project success with project implementation factors (variables), with interactions

Variable	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category - MS)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT	0.953***	1.262***	-4.354***	-4.175***	0.426	6.474*
DONOR COORDINATION	-0.309	-0.366	1.860	1.553	-0.821	0.381
PROJECT LEADERSHIP	0.692***	0.971***	-2.117*	-1.272	2.210**	2.820
COMPLEXITY	-0.005	-0.009*	0.030	0.005	-0.003	- 0.070*
COVERAGE	-0.012	-0.013	0.003	0.012	-0.014	0.420
BUDGET	-2.56e-09	-2.89e-09	-9.16E-09	-3.01E-09	-1.13E-08	1.37E-08
DURATION	0.029**	0.029**	-0.013	0.058	0.044	0.218***
STAFF	0.176	0.242	-1.638**	-0.330	-0.228	0.382
MONITORING and EVALUATION	0.666	0.807	-3.484	-3.147	0.614	1.859
REST and RECUPERATION	-0.172	-0.223	1.196**	0.327	0.169	0.257
PRTs	-0.142	-0.214	0.417	-0.403	1.223	-4.436
ECON.SITUATION	0.0003**	0.0004**	-0.0001	-0.0008	0.0002	0.001
SECURITY SITUATION	0.141	0.189	-0.024	-0.204	0.077	1.478
Combination of the National Government's Support and Project Leadership	0.793**	1.216***	-4.340*	-4.070**	1.949	4.884

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

7.1 National Government's Support

Our first hypothesis states that the national government's support will be positively correlated with project success. All bivariate statistical tests offered strong evidence in support of this hypothesis, confirming that the level of the national government's support did matter greatly for the successful project implementation in our sample: chi-square, linear regression and ordered probit regressions yielded positive coefficients achieving statistical significance at the $p < 0.01$ level.

Reassuringly, the results of the multinomial logit regression also provide a strong confirmation of the positive role the national government's support plays in successful

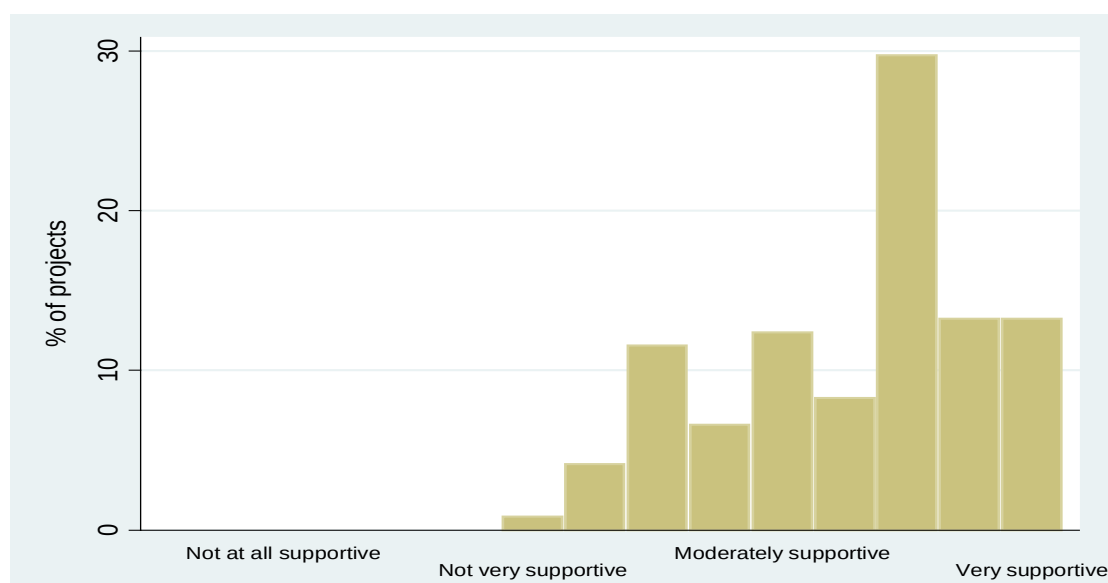
project implementation. With projects in the 'Moderately Successful' category serving as the base category, these results indicate that projects with a *lower* level of national government's support are more likely to fall into 'Unsuccessful' and 'Moderately Unsuccessful' categories rather than into 'Moderately Successful' category, with negative coefficients at the statistical significance level of $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$ respectively. Similarly, projects with *higher* national government support are more likely to fall into 'Successful' and 'Highly successful' categories rather than into 'Moderately successful' category, with positive coefficients achieving $p < 0.1$ and $p < 0.01$ significance level respectively.

The analysis through multivariate tests supports the results of the bivariate tests and gives a strong proof of the weight the national governments support has in the successful project implementation. Multivariate linear and ordered probit regressions yielded results in support of our hypothesis, both at the $p < 0.01$ significance level. The results show that the projects with *lower* level of national government's support were more prone to become 'Unsuccessful' and 'Moderately Unsuccessful' rather than 'Moderately successful', in both cases with negative coefficients at the statistical significance level of $p < 0.01$. And on the contrary, the projects that enjoyed *higher* national government's support were more likely to become 'Highly successful', with positive coefficients at < 0.01 significance level.

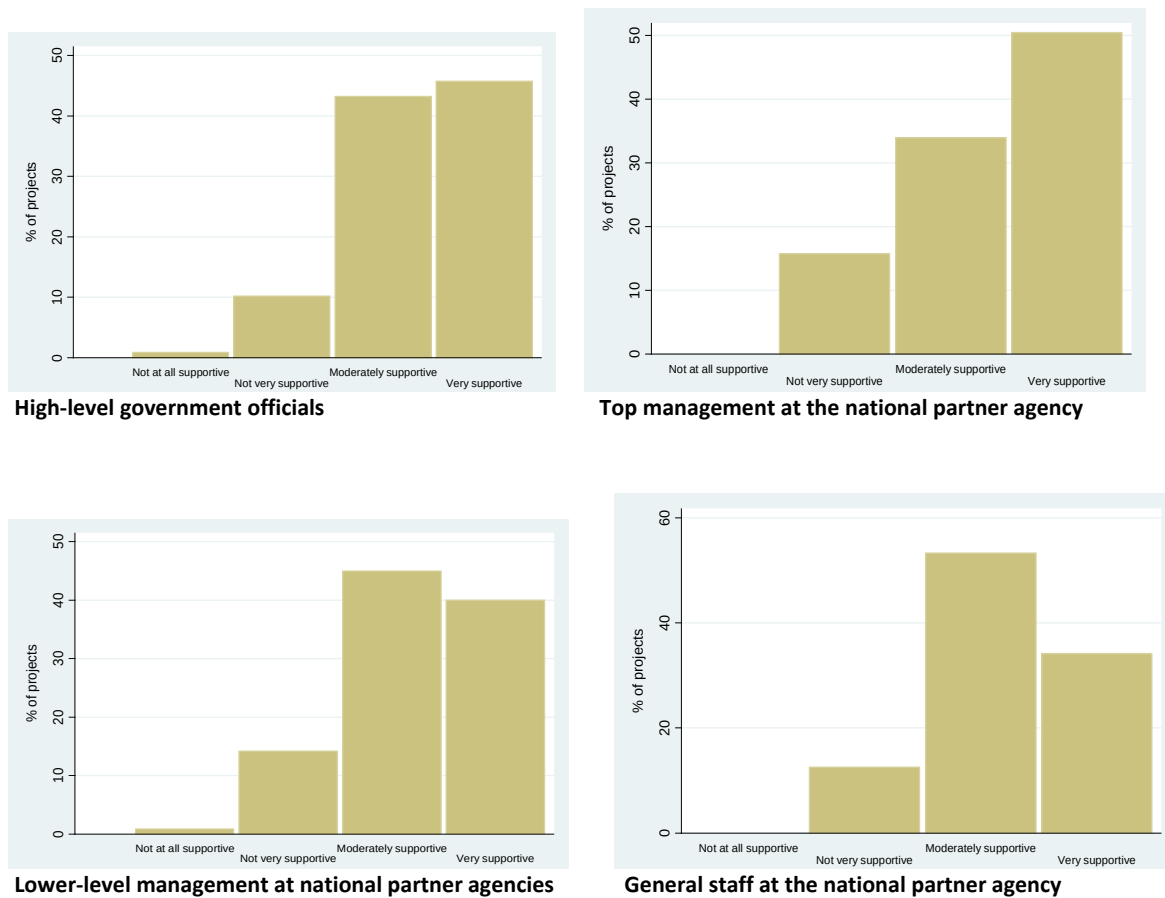
With such robust results from both bivariate and multivariate regression tests, the factor of the national government's support appears to be a particularly powerful predictor of project effectiveness in our explanatory model.

The measure of the variable of the national government's support consisted of the indicators of support by the national officials at four levels of authority¹⁸⁶. The cluster of 'top-management of the national partner agencies' was described by respondents as the most supportive group of national authorities (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.3 – National Government's support level (all indicators cumulative)



¹⁸⁶ Survey respondents on the whole, and respondents who were international development practitioners in particular¹⁸⁶, perceived the level of national government's support that their projects received as fairly high (Figure 5.3). This is an indication that there might have been an element of social desirability present in responses on the level of the national government's support (see Chapter 2). However, if we assume that social desirability bias influenced the responses to the questions about the level of the national government's support, such bias would have worked to reduce variation in the factor of the national government's support, thus increasing the likelihood of not finding a statistically significant relationship between this variable and project success. We therefore conclude that social desirability bias does not account for why the coefficient for national government's support is positive and statistically significant.

Figure 7.4 – National Government’s Support (by authority level)

Such a trend can be explained by the feedback received from the semi-structured interviews with development practitioners working in Afghanistan. The interviews provided a rich qualitative account on how exactly the level of the national government’s support influences project success, and what practices undermine or help improve such support.

Support received from the top management at the national counterpart agencies

Interviews show that the top management at the national counterpart agencies (usually Ministers and their deputies)¹⁸⁷ are often the first point of contact at the national partner agencies, with whom the international aid and development project teams have very close working relationships.¹⁸⁸ Most of the interaction and support received from the national government comes from this cluster of national authorities, and they thus play a crucial role in the collaboration and successful project implementation.¹⁸⁹ The experience of successful joint project implementation shows that such support of the government top management at the national counterpart agency translates into their ‘consistent availability to plan implementation activities and quickly adjust them to new circumstances if need be, which makes the implementation process flexible and able to resolve arising bureaucratic and logistic complications’.¹⁹⁰

Strong commitment and support from the top management of the national counterpart agencies enable the projects to scale up substantially and exceed the targets defined in the project document. This commitment and action have in turn convinced other donors to provide co-funding that financed the expansion of project activities.¹⁹¹

An excerpt from an evaluation resonating with such opinion reads: ‘The Project enjoyed

¹⁸⁷ National counterpart agencies included government ministries, agencies, directorates and commissions. The top-management of the national counterpart agency included ministers and deputy ministers, as well as heads and deputy heads of agencies, directorates and commissions.

¹⁸⁸ Interview # 32, Kabul, 25 October 2009, Interview # 48, Kabul, 15 November 2009.

¹⁸⁹ Interview # 21, Kabul, 23 October 2009, Interview # 53, Kabul, 20 November 2009, Interview # 11, Kabul, 29 September 2009.

¹⁹⁰ Interview # 64, Kabul, 25 November 2009.

¹⁹¹ Interview # 14, Kabul, 29 September 2009.

the support of MAIL's Deputy Minister, who helped the project in difficult situations. It is well known that a supporter in such a position can make all the difference'.

The support of the top management at the national counterpart agencies also results in mobilizing teams of competent staff members on the national project implementation side, where the Minister or the head of the agency gives clear instructions and personally monitors the progress.¹⁹² Securing buy-in from and establishing close working relationships with the Minister or a head of a national counterpart agency and his/her immediate team was therefore said to be a key component for successful planning and implementation of a project.¹⁹³

In discussing the role of the heads and managers at national ministries and agencies in Afghanistan, one is mindful of the fact that some of them arrived to their positions in the government from being military field commanders or having other forms of informal authority, and that many of them could join the government because of such position of informal power in provinces and localities (please see discussion on p. 83 for more detail). The rumors and facts of atrocities and human rights violations committed in the past by these now ministers and managers, or by the soldiers and militia under their command, made many international donors and partners ambivalent about the cooperation with these former military commanders in their current role at the ministries. Survey respondents recognized that such situation was less than ideal, but at the same time frequently expressed the opinion that 'one has to work with what

¹⁹² Interview # 72, Kabul, 26 November 2009, Interview # 54, Kabul, 14 November 2009.

¹⁹³ Interview # 83, Kabul, 29 November 2009.

[whom] he/she has as a national counterpart, - the alternative is not to engage at all and make the entire ministry, and the potential project beneficiaries pay by depriving them of assistance'¹⁹⁴.

Regularity and continuity of dialogue between national and international project implementation teams

Regularity of a candid dialogue between the national and international project implementation teams creates a constructive and effective work atmosphere, transparent information exchange. This, in turn, helps ensure credibility and predictability of the funding and financial flows under the project, and a continued dialogue on policy and decisions.

Continuity of the core counterpart team throughout the project implementation cycle is a prerequisite in order to build a successful working relationship, maintain the national counterpart team in high capacity, and interact effectively without major delays.

Disruption of collaboration and support from the national partner agency due to a change in the management of the national counterpart agency (an event that occurs frequently within the relatively new and unstable government of Afghanistan)^{195 196}, often leads to a loss of momentum in project implementation. Project activities were

¹⁹⁴ Interview with two high-ranking UN managers, Kabul, 21 September, 14 November 2009.

¹⁹⁵ Interview # 102, Kabul, 2 December 2009, Interview # 25, Kabul, 27 October 2009.

¹⁹⁶ Roughly one third of the projects covered in this study were in one way or another influenced by a change in the management of the national counterpart agency.

either stalled for a period of time until the new national counterpart team was brought up to speed, or their implementation was abandoned altogether as the new team had its own agenda and priorities. This happens mainly due to the fact that outgoing heads of agency take with them most of their team if they move to other posts, or this team is gradually replaced with the appointees of a new head.¹⁹⁷ 'A high degree of nepotism and kinship is widespread within Afghan governmental structures, with family and tribal ties playing a major role in the selection and appointment of officials at various levels of power.'¹⁹⁸ Underlying to this problem is the fact that in forming the unity government under President Karzai, part of the early on arrangement was that ministries and other key positions were divided between former warlords and other persons of power who were or became pro-government.

The distribution of posts was done with the idea of securing political agreement and compliance of key warlords. Bringing the authority of major warlords to the government, while at the same time distracting them from their control in provinces, was done with the ultimate goal of empowering the central government and establishing the authority of the state. While politically savvy, such arrangements have had negative ramifications in that certain warlords regained and even improved their standing in provinces through a combination of formal authority within the government and a continuation of their influence at the provincial level through their armed militia, clan and tribal networks. With ministries split between competing

¹⁹⁷ Interview # 63, Kabul, 4 November 2009, Interview # 48, Kabul, 11 November 2009.

¹⁹⁸ Interview # 38, Kabul, 15 October 2009.

warlords, and some warlords gaining disproportionate power, continuous turnaround and distribution of posts to the members of warlord's political alliances ensued, with few appointments made on the basis of merit and few posts given to actual technocrats. Such distribution of posts and turnaround at the highest ministerial level trickles down with reappointments at the lower managerial level, creating disruption and negatively impacting the level of the national government's support, and ultimately project implementation success. The experience of one of the less successful projects in my dataset is a good illustration. Between 2002 and project closing in 2008, there were six Ministers of Education of Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹ Each minister bringing in a new team not only created setbacks and delays in implementation, it also undermined the establishment of clear project management system and the distribution of roles and functions between the national and international project implementation teams.²⁰⁰ 'Under such circumstances it is very hard to build and sustain a sense of national ownership of the project implementation process and the project's final results, however much one thinks it matters and wants to be sensitive to it'.²⁰¹ For instance, as a result of frequent changes in leadership, in one project, a Teacher's Guide developed for curriculum and classroom teaching improvement was not introduced and utilized as widely as it was intended. In-situ training for primary school teachers was only conducted once, rather than in the

¹⁹⁹ Interview # 63, Kabul, 4 November 2009, Interview # 50, Kabul, 18 November 2009.

²⁰⁰ Interview # 95, Kabul, 6 December 2009.

²⁰¹ Interview # 49, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

course of several follow-up training sessions that the national counterpart team had been supposed to organize based on the materials provided.²⁰²

In several other instances, a change in management at the national counterpart agency in the midst of project implementation halted already ongoing successful project implementation and resulted in substantial delays, ultimately leading to suspension of certain activities under the project. For instance, ‘differences in the absorption capacity and the willingness to collaborate’ of the new management of a national counterpart at a sub-national level for a health project, together with specific personal styles of running an office, resulted in questioning the usefulness of envisaged project activities in support of local NGOs delivering basic health services²⁰³ that were requested and agreed with the preceding management of the national counterpart. Instead, a preference was expressed for a greater number of long and short term study opportunities abroad.²⁰⁴ Thus, it was only possible to deliver about half of the intended assistance to local NGOs in the provision of advice and services on maternal health, mental health, and prevention of TB and malaria. The other half of funding allocated for capacity building was used for study tours, ‘with several staff members who participated in the trainings having left for a different job within the following year’.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Basic health services cover the areas of Maternal and Newborn Health, Child Health and Immunization, Public Nutrition, Control of TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS, Mental Health education and awareness, and Disability awareness, prevention, education, assessment and referrals.

²⁰⁴ Interview # 32, Kabul, 25 October 2009

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

Support of lower-level managers and general staff

As with the top management of national partner agencies, the level of support received from lower-level managers and general staff plays its own role in successful project implementation. This tier of staff members performs the bulk of the daily routine work under the project implementation plan, mainly administrative and logistic. However, while being an important part of the national counterpart team, the lower-level managers and general staff are usually reluctant to take initiative for more complex tasks, or take independent decisions, instead preferring to act upon the instructions of a higher-level management. Such dynamics reflect on the overall level of support the project implementation process receives from the lower-level managers. Such reluctance and lack of initiative in the implementation of day to day functions was most commonly explained by ‘cultural preference to defer decision-making to the elderly, unwillingness to take risk and responsibility rooted in perceived lack of relevant expertise’.²⁰⁶ This fact might be another reason that the top management at the national counterpart agencies are referred to most frequently by their international counterparts, even in addressing matters of smaller significance, and thus become the main point of contact for collaboration. ‘Under such circumstances, the number of issues that the top managers need to attend to makes it hard for them to manage everything, on time, and with desired level of attention’.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Interview # 58, Kabul, 31 October 2009, Interview # 13, Kabul, 10 September 2009.

²⁰⁷ Interview # 26, Kabul, 24 October 2009.

Thus, *internal* team dynamics substantially influence the quality of the national government's support. In addition, semi-structured interviews also revealed that the nature and quality of the national government's support to project objectives varies considerably depending on several *external* considerations discussed below.

Mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities

Experience shows that at times, national and international project teams working on the same project do not have a clear understanding of how roles and responsibilities are shared between the two sides. International project teams and national counterparts have fairly different perceptions with regard to the level of consultation and cooperation that is expected of one another. National counterpart agency teams sometimes feel they were not sufficiently involved or consulted, for instance, in the selection of consultants for specific project activities, or in the choice of the geographical project implementation site. At the same time, the international project team believes that the relevant Ministry's officials were indeed consulted and were requested to take part in deliberations and decisions, and suggest that the difference in perception is rooted in communication difficulties within the Ministry itself.²⁰⁸ Overall, several factors that might lead to such situations of misunderstanding were cited in the course of interviews: (1) the national counterpart representatives do not have sufficient time and overlook the request for informal cooperation and consultation, (2) the two teams have

²⁰⁸ Interview # 52, Kabul, 21 November 2009.

different interpretations and expectations towards ‘involvement’ and ‘engagement’ and how it is arranged, and (3) the two teams have differing preferences for formal consultations.

To address such situations of misunderstanding and prevent their future occurrence, team leaders of successful projects said that, jointly with the national project team, they undertook a series of intensive work sessions to establish performance benchmarks, clear communication and collaboration procedures, and assign a staff member in charge of a certain line of project implementation on both sides. Such sessions also helped to bring to light and identify common wishes, goals, and values, and allowed the members of both teams – national and international – participate in the planning and decision-making on project activities. Conducting such joint sessions, even if it required spending additional time and resources for their organization and implementation at the onset of the project, proved very rewarding as it set a tone of openness, respect and fairness in decision-making and in the distribution of the workload between the two teams. Most importantly, it gave a clear understanding of the tasks ahead, and the level of performance expected of both sides, creating a sense of reciprocal accountability.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Interview # 110, Kabul, 9 December 2009.

Capacity building interaction

The quality of support received from the national counterpart agency is directly proportionate to the quality and capacity of the personnel at the said agency.²¹⁰ However it was also stressed repeatedly in the course of the interviews that the national government's support is often reciprocal in nature, and its intensity and quality also depends on the quality of input by the international project team into this circular interaction. In other words, the extent to which the international project team is able to contribute to the improvement of its national counterpart's skills and capacity is an important determinant of the national government's support quality.²¹¹

This dynamic is well illustrated by the successful experience of one of the first projects in the area of alternative livelihood undertaken in Afghanistan. One of the project components was aimed at creating a data-base of assistance provided in the area of alternative livelihoods, accumulating institutional memory on successful practices, in order to facilitate the design and coordination of future activities in this thematic area by various national and international stakeholders. The team of international professionals charged with assisting in the development of the database worked on the premises of the national counterpart agency, and functioned on a daily basis as one team with Afghan colleagues. This allowed for a speedy assimilation by the national counterpart team of previously unfamiliar concepts such as an information data-base, the establishment of data parameters, and data collection criteria and methodologies.

²¹⁰ Interview # 48, Kabul, 26 November 2009, Interview # 16, Kabul, 21 September 2009, Interview # 45, Kabul, 20 November 2009.

²¹¹ Interview # 57, Kabul, 21 November 2009, Interview # 115, Kabul, 9 December 2009.

The national counterpart team successfully continued to function independently during the first year of collaboration, and long after project completion.²¹² Such interdependent and reciprocal complexity in the relationship and collaboration between the international project team and national government counterpart becomes even more obvious in projects in which the national government and the donor decided against creating Project Implementation Units (PIUs) (an administrative team dedicated to a particular project within the international agency)²¹³, opting instead to channel all administrative functions – human resources, procurement and finance – through the implementing ministries and agencies, with the aim to train and build capacity within the national partner agency.

Avoiding the creation of such parallel institutions as PIUs, and instead encouraging the national institutions to fulfill PIUs functions, is considered to be good practice in post-conflict countries with weak state institutions, as it allows the staff of governmental institutions practice and develop in the areas of management, administration, financial monitoring and reporting, etc. International development agencies attempt to follow such ‘good practice’, which makes the decisions on whether to create a PIU heavily political. Thus, even when there was concern that national institutions and mechanisms were not in place at the beginning of the project to be able

²¹² Interview # 82, Kabul, 24 November 2009, Interview # 31, Kabul, 3 October 2009.

²¹³ ‘Dedicated management units designed to support development projects or programmes. PIUs that are parallel to country systems tend to undermine national capacity building efforts, distort salaries and confuse accountability for development’ (OECD/DAC 2008b).

to handle the national execution (NEX)²¹⁴ modality, the ‘donors went ahead with the arrangement that was bound to fail’.²¹⁵

Stressing the need to strengthen local agencies rather than delegate implementation to a PIU or use external expertise, the ideal is that project implementation becomes a mainstream function of the agency supported by private-sector consultants and mentors.

Experience shows that for this approach to achieve its objectives, it is essential to ensure adequate measures for rapid capacity-building within the national partner agency’s team²¹⁶ in the very beginning of the project, or indeed have a PIU established at least for the initial stages of project implementation. Alternatively, as with the National Solidarity Programme, implemented by the MRRD, national execution modality can be maintained, but facilitation can be outsourced to NGOs, to ensure a smooth start and quality performance. Otherwise, the fate of individual projects depends on the low project implementation capacity of the national counterpart team, where implementation speed and quality suffers.

With a dedicated PIU, the joint implementation of a project is at the same time a capacity building exercise for the national counterpart agency’s personnel in a wide range of tasks, ranging from administration and reporting, to policy analysis and

²¹⁴ Interview # 37, Kabul, 29 October 2009.

²¹⁵ UNDP Counter-narcotics Trust Fund Report (2009), UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme Evaluation (UNDP 2009d).

²¹⁶ Interview # 72, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

planning.²¹⁷ Joint project implementation also creates within the national project team a sense of ownership of project objectives and products. This in turn contributes to the sustainability of the project's achievements once the project is complete and project results and products are transferred under the supervision of the national counterpart agency for maintenance and continuity, whether it is premises constructed or provision of health services. As a result, the projects in which the capacity *and* limitations of the national counterpart team were understood at the onset and were dealt with adequately tended to develop further stable working relationships, greater support from the national counterpart, and achieve successful implementation results.²¹⁸ 'Project implementation often entails performing tasks some of my staff members have never dealt with before. Making this clear to our international counterparts and requesting a slower pace and assistance with such functions was important for the learning process and better performance in the future, but also for developing collegial relationship between the national and international project implementation teams'.²¹⁹

Another, comparatively unconventional approach to capacity building was undertaken by the World Bank under its Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP) launched in 2004²²⁰. With a budget of 10 million US dollars, financed through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the programme aimed to recruit highly qualified *overseas* Afghans as an emergency measure, and to place them in high-level advisory

²¹⁷ Interview # 65, Kabul, 24 November 2009.

²¹⁸ Interview # 92, Kabul, 1 December 2009.

²¹⁹ Interview with Deputy Minister at one of the national counterpart agencies, Kabul, 10 September 2009.

²²⁰ Designed in 2002, the programme required extensive discussion and planning to provide for smooth logistic arrangements of the envisaged relocation of Afghan expatriates with special management arrangements set up with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

functions in government ministries, supporting their salaries up to the level of expatriates working in Afghanistan. To complement and further expand the AEP, the Bank later designed and introduced the Lateral Entry Program (LEP), which recruited Afghans locally, from the staff of international organizations and the private sector, and deployed them in the civil service managerial positions. The intention behind this type of recruitment was that the majority of staff would remain in civil service upon the completion of the programme, while in the meantime their presence and collaboration with their civil service colleagues contribute to internal capacity development within the ministries at which they were placed. In 2007, both AEP and LEP were superseded by the Management Capacity Program (MCP). With the same principle of providing qualified personnel to state institutions, MCP brought in significant changes in scope and strategy. Over the period of three years, MCP aimed at hiring 240 highly qualified Afghans on two-year contracts, focusing on five priority functions in public administration, - including public finance management, human resources management, policy design and regulation, and project management.

Gradually, and while maintaining their major focus on the executive bodies, MCP expanded from the center to provincial administrations. Given the World Bank mandate of non-interference with the political affairs of partner governments²²¹, the project funded civil service posts only, with no support to positions of political nature, including those in the judiciary, military and law enforcement (WB 2008a). From 2005

²²¹ the Bank is, according to its Article IV/10, prohibited from any political activity: The Bank and its officers shall not interfere in the political affairs of any member; nor shall they be influenced in their decisions by the political character of the member or members concerned. Only economic considerations shall be relevant to their decisions.

and until 2008, the Bank's capacity building programme recruited and deployed some 230 high level advisors and managers to approximately 20 public institutions. These externally recruited civil servants contributed to maintaining and strengthening a weak state apparatus during this critical period. Improved capacity was seen as an intended trickle-down effect of the on the job training and coaching. While coaching advisers introduced good systems and processes, the staff recruited under the capacity development programme 'played a key role in promoting better procedures and more structured ways of working', having assisted the government's public administration reform process and merit-based hiring and promotion initiatives of the World Bank (Disch 2008).

Professional mentoring/Coaching and Co-location

As for the ways the national counterpart team can be enhanced in order to be able to provide greater support to project implementation process, development practitioners interviewed argued that one of the most effective, if difficult, ways applied so far was direct mentoring. 62 percent of respondents for projects in the category of moderately to highly successful mentioned coaching or mentoring as a useful tool.

Placing one or several international team members at the national counterpart agency, also called 'co-locating', brought the most rewarding results in the joint project implementation process, by establishing a routine personal contact on a daily basis.

Most commonly, the practice of direct mentoring is employed to support the work of top government officials and ministers through the placement of high ranking foreign advisors in government offices. Advisory support from these professionals bears a political and policy character. But what had a more direct effect on project implementation success was technical-level mentorship to the national counterpart ministries²²², which allowed for joint work of the national and international project teams in performing the tasks that were assigned to the national counterpart team. Such mentorship was particularly relevant and rewarding at the initial stages of project implementation in order to bring the national team up to speed and upgrade the skill level by practical demonstration and application of best practices that exist.²²³

A survey on the outcomes of capacity building coaching for the Afghan Public Service conducted by the UN Development Programme (2009) at nine national ministries and agencies indicates fairly high levels of beneficiary satisfaction across coaching objectives (Figure 7.4.1)

²²² Interview # 47, Kabul, 2 November 2009.

²²³ Interview # 20, Kabul, 17 October 2009, Interview # 41, Kabul, 19 November 2009.

Figure 7.4.1

SUMMARY OF CAPACITY FOR THE AFGHAN PUBLIC SERVICE (CAP) RAPID IMPACT ASSESSMENT RESULTS

QUESTION	BENEFICIARY SATISFACTION SCORE: CAP PROJECT 5 = highest: 1=lowest									
	MCI	MCIT	JCMB	MTCA	CAO	MLSA	MA	MEW	IARSC	Average
Satisfaction with CAP	2.67	3.40	3.50	4.20	4.25	3.50	3.67	3.20	4.00	3.60
Acceptance of coaching as a tool for country director	3.33	3.40	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.33	3.20	3.75	3.67
Impact of coaching on team performance	2.67	3.00	3.63	4.00	3.75	4.00	3.67	3.30	3.50	3.50
Application of acquired skills and knowledge	2.67	3.40	3.63	3.40	3.50	3.75	3.33	3.50	3.50	3.41
Impact of coaching on personal development	2.67	2.80	3.63	3.60	4.00	3.25	2.67	3.50	3.50	3.29
Participation in coaching sessions	3.00	2.80	3.50	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.70	3.50	3.37
Relationship between coach and coached	3.33	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.75	3.50	4.00	3.70	3.50	3.59
Satisfaction with work style of the coach	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.80	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.95
Total (out of 40)	25.34	26.80	29.89	31.80	31.50	30.00	29.67	29.10	30.25	29.38
Beneficiary satisfaction (%)	63%	67%	75%	80%	79%	75%	74%	73%	76%	73%

Note: MCI indicates Ministry of Commerce and Industry; MCIT, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology; JCMB, Joint Coordination and Management Board; MTCA, Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation of Afghanistan; CAO, Control and Audit Office; MLSA, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; MA, Ministry of Agriculture; MEW, Ministry of Energy and Water; IARSC, Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission.

Source: CAP Project, Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey, March 2008. Conducted after completion of six months of assignment of coaches.

Source: UNDP 2009a

The Capacity for the Afghan Public service (CAP) focused on three major components of 1) providing coaching and advisory services to senior civil servants and other line functionaries; 2) providing basic management and administration services at the provincial and district levels; and 3) developing a national market of capacity builders through the provision of international, regional and Afghan national coaching and advisory services on a large scale and at reduced cost. In practice this meant provision of on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring to Afghan officials through

the assignment of highly experienced and skilled civil service personnel from well-established civil service systems in the region. In some instances, and in order to further increase the benefit of the coaching exercise, the international coaches were paired with national coaches who could learn from their international partner and be able to perform the same function in the future. Such method allowed to multiplier project benefits, raising its overall efficiency. CAP has recruited 29 international coaches from the Indian Civil Services under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government of India, the Government of Afghanistan and UNDP. Two international coaches have been recruited as UN Volunteers to work at the sub-national level. The project has also recruited 33 Afghan national coaches, who are working in close collaboration with the international coaches. All the successfully recruited international and national coaches have been assigned to government ministries and institutions (UNDP 2009a).

An assessment of the civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict (UN 2011), (conducted well after my research field trip to Afghanistan was finalized) prepared by the Senior Advisory Group appointed by the UN Secretary General Ban, makes similar recommendations on coaching and co-locating international capacities with national institutions. The report states that the “International personnel should be physically co-located within national institutions, as long as their safety and security can be ensured. This principle should be adopted by all international actors in conflict-affected States. For the United Nations, exceptions to this policy should have to be justified”. Going

beyond the goal of sharing skills and improving the capacity of national institutions from within, the report makes this recommendation on co-location as one of the measures to improve the national ownership of international reconstruction and development programmes.

While coaching and mentorship proved to be an effective tool, well – received and appreciated by the national counterparts, one should however be aware of a potentially negative outcome related to the practice of direct mentorship that comes to light from the experience. Assisting the national team by implementing a portion of their responsibilities for a prolonged period of time usually leads to an unhealthy dependency of the national counterparts. Support should not be given *without* persistent encouragement of the national counterparts for taking over and becoming more in charge. With time, it might become a habit for the national counterpart team members to be just observers, not willing or able to assume their share of the workload and used to relying on their international colleagues.²²⁴

Another potentially adverse outcome of mentorship may arise from having too many people willing to assist and mentor a national counterpart agency. Multiple mentors representing different international development agencies with competing interests and conflicting priorities only undermined the progress in project implementation. International mentors pursuing their different agendas sometimes ‘stab each other in the back’, while national colleagues observe this and either take advantage

²²⁴ Interview # 53, Kabul, 12 November 2009.

of internal politics, or simply become demoralized, either of which affects the overall project implementation rates.²²⁵ Such negative experience also brings to light the issue of coordination (or willingness to coordinate) among international players, a matter which I discuss in considerable detail further in this section.

Mentoring is not always possible or suitable. Often, international project teams are constrained in their time and resources to perform mentoring, especially if it was not envisaged in the project design and/or the international team is simply understaffed. In such cases, complex tasks that the national counterpart team was put in charge of are either handled at the level of competence available at the Ministry at the moment, or are not addressed at all, leading to often substantial delays in implementation and disappointment on both sides.²²⁶ Development projects often contract national NGOs to address such situations, and to implement substantive tasks under the project, such as delivering training, or delivering services at the provincial level and remote areas where partner ministries do not have enough capacity to do so.

Outsourcing NGOs

Another practice which has a potential of improving the quality of the national government's support is to engage national NGOs working on the issue that is the focus of particular project. Assigning execution of project components to facilitating NGOs is a practical tool to address logistic constraints. In addition, it is also in line with the

²²⁵ Interview # 28, Kabul, 29 October 2009, Interview # 102, Kabul, 2 December 2009.

²²⁶ Interview # 82, Kabul, 24 November 2009.

overarching goal of the international community to promote the Afghan civil society and Afghan NGOs.

However, what at first seems like a universally beneficial solution also has potential for creating tensions, and affecting the relationship between the international and national project implementation teams, with the international team performing a 'go-between' role between the national counterpart ministry and an NGO²²⁷. Experience shows that in practice in the field, relationships between Government and NGOs are generally cooperative. But at the institutional level, both NGOs and government officials express mistrust of each other. Government ministries staff sometimes complain that NGOs provide competition, while enjoying greater flexibility with the range of activities they are allowed and are able to undertake, and possessing better financial means to do so.

National counterpart ministry representatives at the provincial level have little leverage to assert their authority over the provincial operations carried out by NGOs and start to feel they are not adequately respected by NGOs. They complain that they are not involved in proposal drafting, have no opportunity to weigh in on the performance of the contracted NGO, and have little role altogether.²²⁸ Sometimes government ministry's staff expressed opinion that they wish the NGOs simply were not there. Awareness of such possible complications and potential for tensions, and special care paid by the international project team to clearly separate, define and document the

²²⁷ Interview # 29, Kabul, 23 October 2009.

²²⁷ Interview # 49, Kabul, 21 November 2009, Interview # 33, Kabul, 25 October 2009.

²²⁸ Interview # 86, Kabul, 26 November 2009, Interview # 52, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

roles between the national counterpart team and an outsourced NGO helps avoid potential tension and conflict situations among three project implementing parties.²²⁹

Outsourcing to NGOs also brings to light the issue of remuneration discrepancy, when even low-skilled personnel of an NGO sponsored by a foreign partner NGO or an aid agency is better paid than the managerial staff of the national partner agency.

An example starkly illustrates the issue. Among staff working towards the same project, a provincial director on counter-narcotics (employed and paid by the national government ministry) would earn US\$200 per month, while a security guard at a foreign-sponsored counter-narcotics related NGO would earn US\$500. Such salary discrepancies fuel constant staff turnover: once they have built up their personal skill capacity, personnel of national counterpart agencies have a very powerful incentive to seek other employment opportunities outside of the civil service²³⁰. In consequence, positions are often left vacant, sometimes for months at a time. Employees with lower salaries who remain on their positions become demoralized and unmotivated. They are often absent from their posts, 'remaining on the pay-roll to simply draw salary'.²³¹

This experience once again points to the issue of coordination among multiple development agencies and their interventions. In a very few instances, international project coordinators at different agencies coordinated and succeeded in foreseeing and

²²⁹ Interview # 9, Kabul, 15 September 2009.

²³⁰ On a related note as to the discrepancies in salaries of national and international UN staff members, a recent UN report 'Civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict - Independent report of the Senior Advisory Group' (2011) made similar recommendation that the General Assembly should revise wages of locally recruited United Nations staff to preserve national capacities. It is argued that the current wage principles, developed in 1949, were not designed to nurture national capacities in conflict-affected states.

²³¹ Interview # 31, Kabul, 3 October 2009.

avoiding salary discrepancies among the national staff members working in the same sector and towards the same project. Where such care was taken, it allowed avoiding tensions and low morale, and helped maintain a cohesive and well-functioning team working towards successful project implementation. This finding is also evidence in support of the pre-implementation donor coordination I discuss further in this chapter.

Choice of the national counterpart agency

Managers of several successful projects pointed out the importance of careful selection of a national government entity or line ministry as a national project implementation counterpart. An ideal counterpart is a national government entity with sole responsibility in a particular sector.²³² In certain sectors and thematic areas however, the mandates of several line ministries overlap. Sometimes, a ministry which one would assume would have a mandate to lead and coordinate all activities within a certain sector turns out to have (or be able to execute) only a much limited portfolio, and to be unable to provide the desired level of support to successful project implementation.

A good example is the overlap of mandates between the Ministry of Irrigation and Agriculture ²³³, the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development²³⁴, and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics²³⁵ in the area of alternative development/alternative livelihoods. The Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, whose mandate is to lead and

²³² Interview # 51, Kabul, 21 November 2009, Interview # 50, Kabul, 21 November 2009.

²³³ Interview # 99, Kabul, 1 December 2009.

²³⁴ Interview # 12, Kabul, 18 September 2009.

²³⁵ Interview # 29, Kabul, 23 October 2009.

coordinate all alternative livelihoods activities, whether national or international, has neither the political authority and consequently nor financial capacity and necessary expertise to perform the full spectrum of its mandates. In instances such as this, the interviewed development practitioners argued that involving all relevant ministries, with project activities for each ministry spelled out in the project document was the best strategy to secure the highest level of the national government's support to the project.²³⁶ 'Such an approach does require a very robust internal project coordination mechanism and strong but flexible planning modality, usually set and enforced by the international project team'.²³⁷

Projects that were initiated in an unclear political and logistic setting caused by the overlapping authority of several national entities, and without identifying national partner(s) able to perform their mandate, or without a clear distribution of functions among the national entities involved, 'sooner or later were entangled in the web of confusion over the roles, level of authority, and respective tasks at hand, leading to numerous project delays, and considerable waste of efforts, resources, and time'.²³⁸

The overlap of authority at the provincial level is another source of friction between state agencies, this time between the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development ²³⁹ (MRRD) and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance

²³⁶ Interview # 49, Kabul, 21 November 2009, Interview # 33, Kabul, 25 October 2009.

²³⁷ Interview # 77, Kabul, 27 November 2009.

²³⁸ Interview # 37, Kabul, 20 October 2009.

²³⁹ The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) was established to develop and implement programs promoting responsible social and financial growth in rural areas. It has representation in all 34 Provinces of Afghanistan, and delivers a wide range of programs funded both by the Ministry itself and by the international donors. MRRD has six Programs such as the National Solidarity Programme (aimed at promoting good local governance), the National Area-

(IDLG)²⁴⁰. Both entities exert authority in the provinces and are important partners for virtually any project with an infrastructure construction, economic development, or alternative livelihood component in the provinces.²⁴¹ IDLG and MRRD have important complementary strengths; the former, in its political weight and strong relationship with other public entities, and the latter, in solid technical and logistic presence and access on the ground. Taking into account the overlap of mandates but diverging strengths of these two entities in planning project implementation activities in the provinces might help securing the optimal support of both.²⁴²

Cases of corruption, related impact on project implementation, and safeguards

In a little under 40 percent of semi-structured interviews conducted, respondents were willing to discuss possible instances of corruption that they might have been aware of. The possibility and (mostly unreported) instances of corruption within the project implementation cycle were mentioned mainly in relation to abuse of employment opportunities within both the national counterpart agency's team and with the international project implementation team. With the national counterpart agency, such misuse of authority mostly manifested in the form of appointments by the heads of the

Based Development Programme, the National Emergency Employment Program (aiming to increase access to rural infrastructure for local communities and to provide employment opportunities for rural population), the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Program, the Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Programme, and the Social Protection Department Programme (consisting of an Emergency Response Unit, Food Assistance Unit, and Reintegration Unit).

²⁴⁰ The Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) was established by a Presidential Decree on August 30, 2007, to provide good governance at the sub-national level. IDLG is responsible for the supervision of Provincial Governors, District Governors, Provincial Councils, and Municipalities (except Kabul Municipality). The expectation of creating IDLG was that it will connect the people with the government and thus improve service delivery at the sub-national level.

²⁴¹ Interview # 49, Kabul, 29 October 2009.

²⁴² Interview # 83, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

national counterpart agency of less qualified candidates based on ethnic, family, and kinship ties. Such instances were already mentioned in our earlier discussion on the disruption of collaboration process and lack of continuity in dealings with the national counterpart agency caused by the deposing of old and appointing new staff members by newly arriving managers, who would basically bring their own team replacing the old, knowledgeable staff members.

As for instances of corruption within the international project implementation team, very few, but rather interesting cases of misuse of employment opportunities were came to light. In one such instance, staff members in charge of preparing employment selection tests and corresponding answer keys would leak either or both the test and the answer sheet to their favored candidate, supposedly with an understanding and expectation of future favors, or even possibly a monetary gratuity. In one such instance, when an underperforming national staff member was due to be promoted as a result of his unusually high test scores, relevant team leader requested for holding a second round test, with the test prepared confidentially, and graded by a different staff member. The candidate in question was far from successful in the second round selection, while the staff member suspected of leaking the test materials was given a warning with potential firing. In another similar instance of employment selection, a staff member simply fabricated test scores for an external candidate who was a family member²⁴³. In the course of an oral interview the discrepancy between high test scores

²⁴³ Under UN rules, employment of immediate relatives within the same organizational hierarchy/unit is prohibited due to the potential conflict of interests.

and rather poor performance at the interview became obvious. Following further consideration by the panel members the situation and the set up became obvious, with the demotion of a staff member in question.

In the misuse of employment opportunities by the national counterpart agencies' heads and managers, the international project implementation team leaders can only advise against such selection choices²⁴⁴, even if the position is in fact paid by the project funds²⁴⁵. The ultimate authority and choice lies with the head of the national entity.

However, when it comes to maintaining integrity and good practices within the international team, preventing such misuse of access and authority by staff members is possible through diligence in following selection and hiring procedures. Such diligence and control should be enforced by the team and organization managers. Selection regulations require holding both a written test and an interview, as well as verifying the information provided in the application through a personal conversation and vetting of credentials supplied by the candidates. Another safeguard with new appointments in the team is the granting of an initial short-term appointment and probation contract with the possibility of merit-based extension²⁴⁶.

When it goes unnoticed, needless to say the recruitment of less capable candidates under such circumstances of misuse of authority and fabrication reflects on the overall quality of staff capacity and performance, as unskilled employees go through

²⁴⁴ Interview # 66, Kabul, 27 November 2009, interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

²⁴⁵ Interview # 52, Kabul, 22 November 2009.

²⁴⁶ Such provision is often neglected due to the lengthy recruitment and extension procedures of some agencies. Many UN agencies, for instance, rely on UNDP Country Office in the administrative processing of contracts and payments. Such procedural arrangement often takes time, and creates the risk of project understaffing, in the attempt to avoid which, project managers choose to go ahead with usual one or two-year appointments.

a learning process as they perform their functions, requiring longer times to fulfill assignments, and needing a lot of guidance in the process. Often such team members make procedural mistakes, upon which, a submission for say a financial transaction or procurement of goods and services need to be revised and re-launched. Equally importantly though, other national colleagues on the team sooner or later realize or suspect the circumstances behind such appointments, which in some cases crates resentment and tension, and in others inflates the authority and dictate of a staff member who arranged for such a deal and ‘expanded his camp of allies’²⁴⁷. In both cases, the morale of the team is undermined, but rarely such information is brought to the attention of management for the fear of retaliation slander and undercutting, or even more serious threats²⁴⁸.

Another, similar avenue for corruption and misuse of power within the international project implementation team is in the area of local procurement of goods and services under the project. According to the rules, local supplier companies should respond to bidding notices with their submissions of goods/services and respective price quotations offered. Supplier contracts for major projects are an attractive financial opportunity for local companies, involving the provision of goods ranging from computer equipment to catering services, to construction materials and provision of skilled labor. To gain access to such contracts, private firms are ready and willing to give bribes, either themselves approaching the staff member in charge of procurement, or

²⁴⁷ Interview # 16, Kabul, 20 September 2009, interview # 27, Kabul, 6 October 2009.

²⁴⁸ Interview # 58, Kabul, 31 October 2009, interview # 13, Kabul, 10 September 2009.

once this staff member suggests the possibility of such a deal. Usually, the bribe is at ‘a negotiated rate of a certain percent (often between 5-10 percent) of the total amount of the contract’²⁴⁹. Staff members dealing with procurement are also required to maintain a roster of private firms who were reliable and who delivered good service in the past. Placement in such a roster implies priority consideration and involvement of the firm in future contracts. Thus, the possibility of inclusion in the roster for is another desirable goal for local firms, and for which they would be willing to give a bribe.

With the ample possibilities for corruption and misuse of authority that are embedded in the procurement function, there are also strong safeguards in place provided by the regulations. Most of the international organizations rules require that large amount contracts be reviewed by the office bidding committee comprising representatives of various projects within the office. The panel meets regularly with the responsibility to review and shortlist several best offers, and based on thorough consideration and discussion select the most optimal, cost-effective offer.

For contracts of smaller amount though, usually ranging between 500 – 1000 US dollars, or so called ‘petty cash’²⁵⁰ expenditures, such panel review is not required. Relying on the authority vested in them, procurement officers have the freedom of choosing a provider whose offer they consider the best, making them vulnerable to the temptation of profiting from the deal, or making them a potential target for a bribe

²⁴⁹ Interview # 9, Kabul, 15 September 2009, interview # 31, Kabul, 3 October 2009.

²⁵⁰ Petty cash account is kept with the finance unit and is used for emergency small purchases and expenses required for unforeseen office activities. The use of funds from this account requires management approval and a detailed report and submission of original receipts demonstrating the appropriate use of funds.

offer. Here, respondents believed there was space for possible misuse of discretionary power, providing as examples, albeit unconfirmed, instances of when they believed such misuse took place²⁵¹. Even if minor, the ramifications of such misuse for the well-being and performance of the project are of financial nature, in that the small scale contracts chosen might not be the best price offer available on the market, thus incurring project budget expenditures that could have been avoided.

Cultural factor considerations and personalities

30 percent of the interviewees mentioned the presence of cultural factors, differences in perception and personal conflicts as having the potential to affect the quality of the national government's support and reflect on the smooth implementation of a project. Respondents brought valid arguments and examples of how they struggled with such phenomenon.

The possible influence of cultural factors on project implementation process was mainly present in the of biased, unfavorable attitude and rejection of certain development principles and activities new and alien in the context of Afghanistan, such as for instance family planning, drug addiction prevention and care, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), gender empowerment. It was usually hard to convince national counterpart team members of the need and benefit of providing treatment and care for drug users, as traditionally drug users are seen as criminals and

²⁵¹ Interview # 69, Kabul, 29 November 2009, interview # 18, Kabul, 19 September 2009.

‘deserve punishment’ rather than treatment and support. Occasionally an opinion would be expressed to international project team staff that drug addicts’ hardship and suffering is their own fault and they deserve it²⁵².

A similar attitude of rejection would mostly be expressed towards the concept of planned parenthood through contraception, as well as prevention of sexually STDs through awareness raising and condom distribution campaigns.

Often, projects addressing culturally controversial issues for Afghanistan such as these, received insufficient involvement and commitment from the national counterparts. Good illustrations of this phenomenon include cultural constraints observed in projects that aim to assist female prisoners, male and female drug users who contracted HIV/AIDS through needle sharing, or projects on drug abuse harm reduction that involve the distribution of sterile syringes. There is no doubt that projects in such culturally controversial areas would slide and cease to exist if they were not introduced and promoted by the international community and aid agencies²⁵³. The culture and the attitude towards such marginalized groups needs to be gradually changed, but changes must not be forced upon the national government’s authorities. Good practices that proved effective in the western world might be unacceptably premature in Afghanistan, and exerting pressure will only harm.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009, Interview # 26, Kabul, 5 October 2009.

²⁵³ Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

²⁵⁴ Interview # 5, Kabul, 10 September 2009, Interview # 55, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

‘Experience shows that more often than not, when the international partners insisted and pressured the national counterpart for ideal pursuit of international standards despite the fact that the national counterpart was not ready and able to accept certain approaches, a good intention and assistance were simply not understood and accepted by the national colleagues’. Such lack of understanding and acceptance, together with the lack of previous experience and necessary skills on the side of the national counterpart team made them feel uncomfortable to even attempt implementing activities envisaged by the project, not to mention take initiative and lead the process.

In such circumstances, the second best alternative to such a ‘one-sided’ driving force for project implementation is to find a compromise, and accept a version that might be less than perfect, but which would have a much greater chance to be implemented. Such an incremental process leads to trust building up, and in the next round of projects, a more daring and more complete approach can be ventured together that better lives up to the internationally established standards. This is particularly relevant to projects with a large institution/capacity building component which require a high degree of understanding and acceptance from the side of the national partners involved. ‘That is what it should mean when they say post-conflict reconstruction and development is a long, gradual process’.²⁵⁵ For instance, a criminal justice capacity building programme initially envisaged for two years ultimately required follow-up projects to be designed and launched to extend the programme for four more years. This

²⁵⁵ Interview # 66, Kabul, 27 November 2009, Interview # 52, Kabul, 22 November 2009.

was partly due to the comprehensive nature of the programme: under the programme, provision of infrastructure (refurbishing courts and penitentiary facilities, constructing provincial justice support centers) went hand in hand with revision and development of laws crucial to strengthening the Afghan criminal justice system, as well as with capacity building in the form of training. Such combination of project objectives proved to require a longer period to be effectively addressed from the technical standpoint.

However, another important reason for extension was that by the end of the two-year term of the project, it became clear that the complexity of some of the individual issues that the programme dealt with required extended discussions and negotiation with national counterparts in order to secure their understanding and support. This was true, for instance, of the improvement of juvenile justice legislation, or the reform of the penitentiary legislation with a particular emphasis on the national policy for detained women, including creation of post-release opportunities for female prisoners. While a four-year extension of the project required additional donor support, it allowed for the right pace of policy dialogue between national and international experts in introducing reforms and new practices and standards. Allowing for this process to unfold ultimately lead to the implementation of the envisaged programme objectives.

On a more personal level of cultural interaction between the national government authorities and their international colleagues, several examples and situations were cited when a minor personal dissatisfaction of national managerial staff

members resulted in the ‘cooling off’ in the relationship between the two counterparts that disproportionately affected the project implementation success.²⁵⁶ As an example, a delayed payment to a national high-ranking counterpart of the per diem related to a study visit implemented under the project created a ‘negative aura’ that gradually escalated other tensions and ultimately resulted in the refusal of the representatives of this national counterpart agency to participate in regular inter-agency working group meetings.²⁵⁷

To summarize, national government support plays an important role in project success. Securing such support, and maintaining it throughout the project lifespan depends on a multitude of political and technical factors, some of which can and some of which cannot be influenced, balanced and improved by the international project team members.

From the above discussion, it appears that securing greater levels of the national government’s support means striking the right balance between the political weight and substantive capacity of the partners, and making the best of existing capacity by promoting technical expertise, while being aware of the cultural and personal aspects of the operating environment. This complex balancing task usually falls to the international project team leaders²⁵⁸, a factor I discuss in the following section.

²⁵⁶ Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

²⁵⁷ Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

²⁵⁸ Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

7.2 Project Leadership

Our hypothesis states that strong project leadership on the international project team will be positively correlated with project success.

Four bivariate statistical tests returned strong evidence of the correlation between strong project leadership and project success. Chi-square tests, linear regression and ordered probit regressions yielded statistically significant results at the $p < 0.01$ level (Table 7.5). The results of the bivariate multinomial logit regression also strongly confirm the positive role strong project leadership plays in successful project implementation. The latter results indicate that projects with a *higher* quality of project leadership are more likely than others to fall into the ‘Successful’ and ‘Highly successful’ categories rather than into the ‘Moderately successful’ category, with positive coefficients achieving $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$ significance level respectively.

Table 7.5

Relationship between Project Leadership and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
33.579***	0.965***	0.972***	-0.726	-0.581	.875***	2.438**

Relationship between Project Leadership and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.692***	0.971***	-2.117*	-1.272	2.210**	2.820

<0.01 *** <0.05 ** <0.1 *

These results are robust to controlling for other project characteristics. The project leadership factor thus is another robust predictor of project effectiveness in our explanatory model along with the factor of the national government's support.

The measure of the quality of project leadership in our analysis was composed of six indicators of the professional competence and interpersonal skills of project managers that we derived from the literature. All regression tests described earlier used a cumulative measure of all six indicators.

The accounts of semi-structured interviews with development practitioners confirm that indeed, successful projects were the ones that had a competent project leader (manager), who was not only knowledgeable in a specific thematic area (health, education, engineering, etc.) but who also had a good grasp of management and administration procedures, and was a 'likeable' person with 'moral authority'.²⁵⁹ ²⁶⁰ It is the combination of these three types of qualities that made a project leader most successful in implementing a project.

Project leader's administrative skills

Project leaders who, for instance, had a very strong technical background, but little experience with project management and administration, would struggle with establishing and enforcing clear project implementation plans, with distributing tasks clearly and making timelines clear to the team. They experienced difficulties in

²⁵⁹ Interview # 69, Kabul, 29 November 2009, Interview # 18, Kabul, 19 September 2009.

²⁶⁰ As per Bowles and Renwick's (2009) categorization of policy formulation and implementation leadership into two broad types of 'moral' and 'instrumental', with each type using specific means and techniques.

adjusting tactics and re-allocating the workforce dedicated to a certain activity when required, or in establishing good reporting and evaluation mechanisms to monitor the implementation flow and identify and address hindrances early on in the process.²⁶¹

The results of statistical tests on our hypothesis which posits that projects with stronger project leadership will typically also have a better (stronger) M&E practice, add support to this line of reasoning. Projects in which leaders scored high on all six indicators of project leadership, also had stronger monitoring and evaluation practices, with the results of both chi-square test and bivariate linear regression at $p < 0.01$ significance level (Table 7.6).²⁶²

Table 7.6 - Relationship between Project Leadership and Monitoring and Evaluation

Chi-square	Linear regression
55.807***	0.260***

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

The interview accounts support such statistical evidence. ‘Project leaders have to be able to establish concrete separation and definition of functions among national counterpart team(s), the international project team, and NGO(s)’. At the same time, all decisions and actions need to be in accordance with particular rules and guidance of the international implementing agency (UN, WB, EC, ect.), that are also clear for the national counterpart team, and the project beneficiary. The project leader should be able to demonstrate to

²⁶¹ Interview # 38, Kabul, 25 October 2009, Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

²⁶² Here it is important to notice that although project leadership will usually predate strong evaluation practices, the setting is of course vulnerable to simultaneity bias, and that these results illustrate only correlation, not causation.

the national counterparts that he or she is ready and able to solve bureaucratic complications.²⁶³

Project leader's technical expertise

Similarly, a project manager with good managerial skills and a sound knowledge of project administration tools, but with insufficient technical expertise in the field the project was focusing on, would usually lack professional freedom and resourcefulness in pursuing the project's substantive objectives.²⁶⁴ Such professional aptitude and freedom are irreplaceable for the project leader to be able to translate and apply project objectives and required implementation activities to local conditions in a way that the national government is ready and able to implement, 'otherwise it's just lip-service to effective project implementation. Project leaders, who are the principle contact points for the national counterpart team, are responsible to harmonize project activities with what the clients need – i.e. the national government and the project beneficiaries. Project leaders were able to serve the original purpose of the project best, and complete the project successfully to the degree that they were able to keep abreast of the changing landscape of Afghanistan and adapt the project to withstand fluctuations in political and logistic circumstances.²⁶⁵

As noted earlier, it is often the case that a single development project combines activities involving several sectors of technical expertise. It is hard, if not impossible, to

²⁶³ Interview # 67, Kabul, 25 November, Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

²⁶⁴ Interview # 7, Kabul, 12 September 2009.

²⁶⁵ Interview # 91, Kabul, 4 December 2009.

have a project leader that would have technical competence in all of these areas. We take for instance a project on HIV/AIDS prevention and care, which embeds construction of actual premises, as well as creation of professional and administrative capacity for the national personnel to work and provide HIV/AIDS prevention and care services on the premises constructed.²⁶⁶ In such instances, the project leaders that were most successful were the ones that possessed strong technical expertise in the major area of intervention, HIV/AIDS prevention and care in this case, and enlisted in a *timely* fashion the expertise of professionals in other areas, by either recruiting consultants, or taking initiative and engaging with another international aid agency with previous experience in a subject.²⁶⁷

Project leader's moral leadership qualities

Technical aptitude and administrative and managerial skills are relatively easy to identify and discuss. The types of actions and decisions that characterize these two leadership qualities have been discussed by academics and professionals at length. 'Moral' leadership²⁶⁸ and qualities such as 'having a firm moral compass', 'invoking personal trust' and 'maintaining morale' are harder to define and evaluate. But given the fact that this third type of leadership qualities was mentioned in various terms in almost 80 percent of the semi-structured interviews, with more than a half of these interviews

²⁶⁶ Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009, Interview # 26, Kabul, 5 October 2009.

²⁶⁷ Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

²⁶⁸ As per Bowles and Renwick's (2009) categorization of policy formulation and implementation leadership into two broad types of 'moral' and 'instrumental', with each type using specific means and techniques.

(58 percent) referring to successful projects, I comprise a summary account of moral leadership in the context of post-conflict project implementation based on the feedback received.

Building a *good reputation* and winning the *trust* and *respect* of the national counterparts, as well as maintaining a mutually respectful working relationship, are major components in the relationship and interaction that leads to successful project implementation. A good leader builds trust by showing *dedication, competence, and respect towards* national counterparts²⁶⁹ and by ‘meeting the national counterparts where they are in terms of their choice of policy design and implementation, and their ability to implement certain functions, even if these choices and abilities are not up to the international standards yet.’²⁷⁰

A strong international project leader, who has sound relevant technical, administrative, and interpersonal skills, is important in making projects more successful ‘by winning the respect of the national counterparts and establishing a state of mutual enforcement and accountability’²⁷¹, ‘creating clearly-defined, yet friendly working relationship’²⁷².

A trusting relationship between the international project team and the national counterparts contributes to successful project implementation by facilitating the parties’ efforts to respond to unforeseen contingencies and other disturbances in the

²⁶⁹ Interview # 38, Kabul, 12 November 2009, Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

²⁷⁰ Interview # 76, Kabul, 30 November 2009.

²⁷¹ Interview # 49, Kabul, 31 October 2009, Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

²⁷² Interview # 11, Kabul, 17 September 2009, Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

relationship in a flexible manner. An excerpt from one of the evaluation reports reads for instance: ‘The personality of the international project manager has no doubt contributed substantially to the success of the Project. She managed to turn what many people would have considered disadvantages in her position (being a female and of relatively young age) into assets. She certainly benefited from years of experience working with NGOs in Afghanistan, and her knowledge of Dari brought her many sympathies and her knowledge of the local culture opened her many doors. Her strong and highly motivated team consisting of national experts at central and provincial level has also done an outstanding job under difficult conditions’.

The *dedication* of the international project leader, and the desire to make a difference results in ‘greater enthusiasm and greater attention and dedication to the cause on the side of both his international project team and the national counterpart’,²⁷³ and was mentioned repeatedly as a crucial factor for project team cohesion and ultimate project success.

The members of both national and international teams need to see that the project leader cares about project outcomes, and is there to make the project flourish and achieve its results. He is there to motivate by example. ‘International specialists are usually here for a short period of time. It takes time to understand what the problems are, how projects are implemented and what barriers there are. By the time new staff members become acquainted with the intricacies of their job, their term expires and

²⁷³ Interview # 92, Kabul, 3 December 2009.

they are ready to leave, not being able to accomplish much'.²⁷⁴ 'Working experience in a post-conflict setting benefits the career growth of development agency staff members and they come out here for short term postings and leave soon. It is perceived by colleagues and subordinates as a 'cynical' approach and in turn they are not very motivated to perform to their best in the joint implementation of a project, or indeed remain on the post when another job opportunity becomes available'.²⁷⁵

This view however was balanced out by respondents that spoke of the improvements in terms of the length of posting of staff in various UN and international aid agencies. In fact, in 62 out of 87 interviews conducted, the respondents themselves were in their second or third year with the same agency in Kabul. Moreover, as compared with the experience in Kosovo, where assignments of high ranking officials were usually of 6 month (Herrhausen 2008, p.172), in Afghanistan, the high level UN posts were held by successive Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan Tom Koenigs for one year (2006-2007), Kai Eide for two (2007-2009), and Staffan de Mistura (2009-2011) for two years respectively. Tom Koenigs' Deputy for Political Affairs Chris Alexander was on his post in Kabul for four and a half years (2005 to mid 2009), and Koenigs' Deputy for Relief, Recovery, and Reconstruction²⁷⁶ for three years (2004 – 2007). Nevertheless, there is space for improvement in terms of length of stay and continuity of service by international experts in Kabul, particularly those

²⁷⁴ Interview # 65, Kabul, 13 November 2009.

²⁷⁵ Interview with former UK diplomat with several years of working experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.

²⁷⁶ DSRSG for relief, recovery, and reconstruction is also simultaneously UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan.

specialists who ‘became very knowledgeable of the project specifics, and established good working relationship with national colleagues’.²⁷⁷

‘Very often, successful project implementation is underpinned by a charismatic, dynamic, and dedicated project leader. National counterparts enjoy the interaction with such a manager, through which they learn but are also given their space for decisions and are respected’.²⁷⁸ ‘Sometimes international staff members treat their national colleagues as their subordinates, giving dry instructions, without consulting on whether this or that approach is suitable, and whether the national colleagues have the capacity to perform it. With such an attitude, when there is no feeling of respect from the international colleagues, there is no respect in return from the national colleagues either. And vice versa, if the national colleagues are treated with respect and understanding, they are more likely to give their best to collaboration’.²⁷⁹

In order to take this line of thought further and zoom in and verify the role the international project leader plays in securing national governments support, I hypothesized that projects with strong project leadership will have a higher degree of the national government’s support. Again, in the presence of possible reverse causation, we cannot establish a causal relationship between the two variables. However, we can show that there is indeed a strong association. Our statistical tests results indicate that indeed, projects in which leaders scored high on all six indicators of project leadership

²⁷⁷ Interview with a Deputy Minister of one of the Government Ministries of Afghanistan. Kabul, November 2009.

²⁷⁸ Interview # 27, Kabul, 5 October 2009.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

also had a stronger national government's support (Table 7.7, chi-square and bivariate linear regression test results at $p < 0.1$ and 0.05 statistical significance level respectively).

Table 7.7 - Relationship between Project Leadership and National Government's Support

Chi-square	Linear regression
15.748*	0.208**

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Project leaders in successful projects employed several concrete actions and tactics in building-up and maintaining productive working relationships with their national counterparts. For instance:

- In cases when the attitude of the national counterpart towards collaboration on a project was luke-warm, discuss and try to understand why the national counterparts were not keen on joint work. To the degree possible, project leaders tried to adjust the joint working plan in a mutually beneficial way. They accorded importance to creating a situation where the national counterparts could report to their bosses a meaningful beneficial collaboration;
- Establish open and honest relations from the start, with both sides having a clear understanding of project goals, project team reporting hierarchy, and commitments of both teams. 'It is so often a matter of personalities and the relationship established between the project leader and the manager at the national counterpart agency. One

can have brilliant technical skills but be unable to convince the partners to come on board'.²⁸⁰

- Clarify and find compromise with international partner (or sometimes competitor) agencies on the terms of engagement with a national counterpart team. 'It is an axiom that a project leader should have good interpersonal skills and be a good negotiator. It is not just about the technical skills (which are a must) but personal skills that are crucial for the successful dealing with the international partners, national counterparts, and ultimate successful project implementation;²⁸¹

Such qualities and tactics add a new component of 'moral' leadership to the conventional 'instrumental' ²⁸² (i.e technical and project management) elements of project leadership in the context of post-conflict reconstruction and development project implementation, and presumably, in the context of international aid and development as a whole.²⁸³ They also once again stress the reciprocal nature of the national government's support and the vast role the international project team and the project leader in particular, play in establishing successful collaboration and implementation of a project.

Interaction of Project Leadership with the factor of the National Government's Support

I have shown that there is robust statistical evidence on the importance of good project leadership and national support for project success. The qualitative accounts of

²⁸⁰ Interview with an international project manager with six years of experience in Afghanistan, Kabul, November 2009.

²⁸¹ Interview with top UN diplomat with twenty years of experience in Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine.

²⁸² For a detailed definition of 'instrumental' qualities of leadership please see Literature Review chapter, page 7.

²⁸³ As per Bowles and Renwick's (2009) categorization of policy formulation and implementation leadership into two broad types of 'moral' and 'instrumental', with each type using specific means and techniques.

reciprocity and the interrelation between these two important factors also point us towards the assumption that going hand in hand, strong national government support *together* with strong project leadership should make projects highly likely to succeed.

To test this assumption, we posed a hypothesis which postulates that national government's support combined with strong project leadership has a stronger positive influence on project success than national government support on its own. The results of statistical tests verifying this hypothesis provide strong evidence in its support (see Table 7.8). Uncovering interactions that had not been discussed before in the literature, I believe these results are the most important finding of this study.

Multivariate linear regression and ordered probit regression tests yielded positive coefficients at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$ significance level. The results of the multivariate logit regression shows that projects which enjoyed a combination of strong national government's support and strong project leadership were less likely to be 'unsuccessful' and 'moderately unsuccessful', with negative coefficients at $p < 0.1$ and $p < 0.05$ statistical significance level.

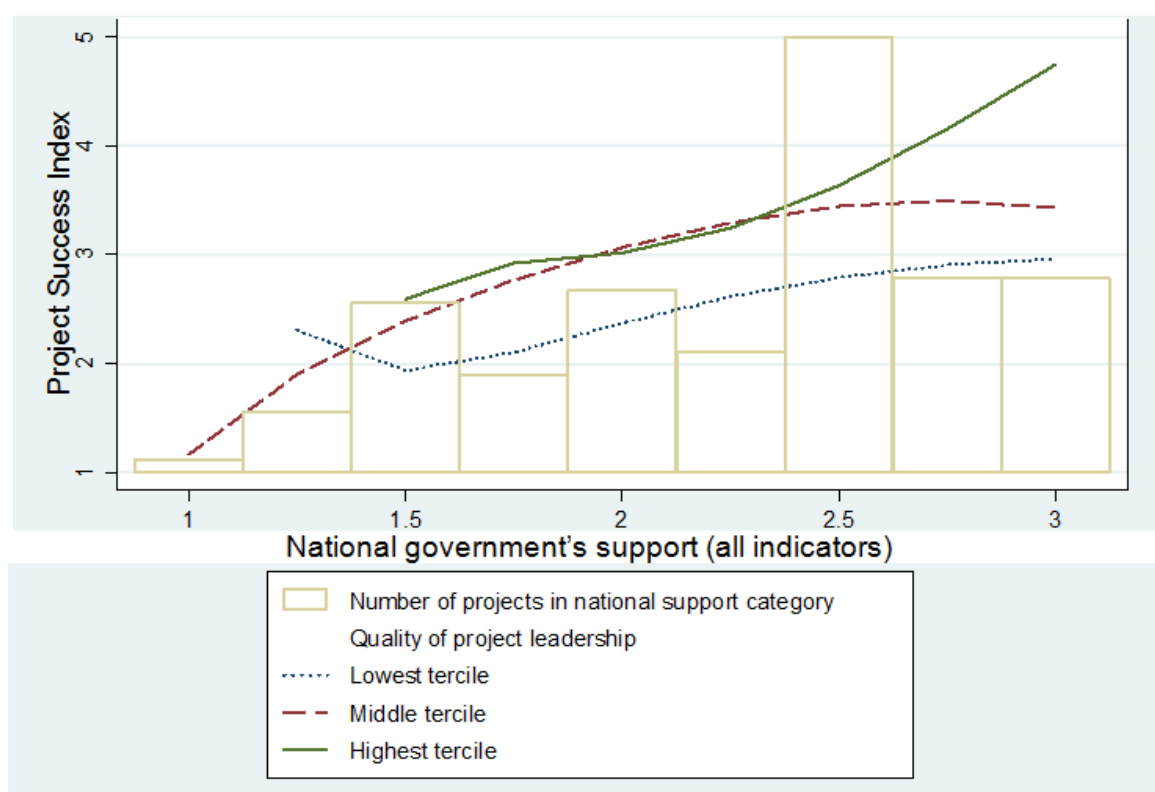
Table 7.8 – Relationship between the combination of the National Government's Support and Project Leadership and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.793**	1.216***	-4.340*	-4.070**	1.949	4.884
<0.01 ***	<0.05**	<0.1*			

In other words, projects that had both a high level of national government's support and a strong leadership on the international side were more likely to succeed than projects that benefited only from one or the other characteristic. This underlines the strong relationship between the *combination* of the national government's support and project leadership with project success.

Graph 7.9

Success at different levels of national government's support and project leadership



The strength of interaction can be seen in Graph 7.9, which illustrates that the rate of success in projects grows as the quality of leadership and the degree of the national government's commitment increases. Such pattern is particularly obvious in projects with the highest tercile of project leadership quality.

7.3 Donor Coordination

As we discussed earlier, the accounts on the impact of donor coordination efforts at the stage of project implementation speak of both positive and negative aspects and outcomes. We hypothesize that donor coordination will not have a positive correlation with project success. Statistical analysis results support our doubts regarding the positive influence of donor coordination efforts on project success. Only one of several regression tests returned a result significant at $p < 0.1$ level (Table 7.10).

Table 7.10

Relationship between Donor Coordination and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
11.908	-0.067	-0.042	0.841*	-0.502	-0.015	0.482

Relationship between Donor Coordination and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
-0.309	-0.366	1.860	1.553	-0.821	0.381

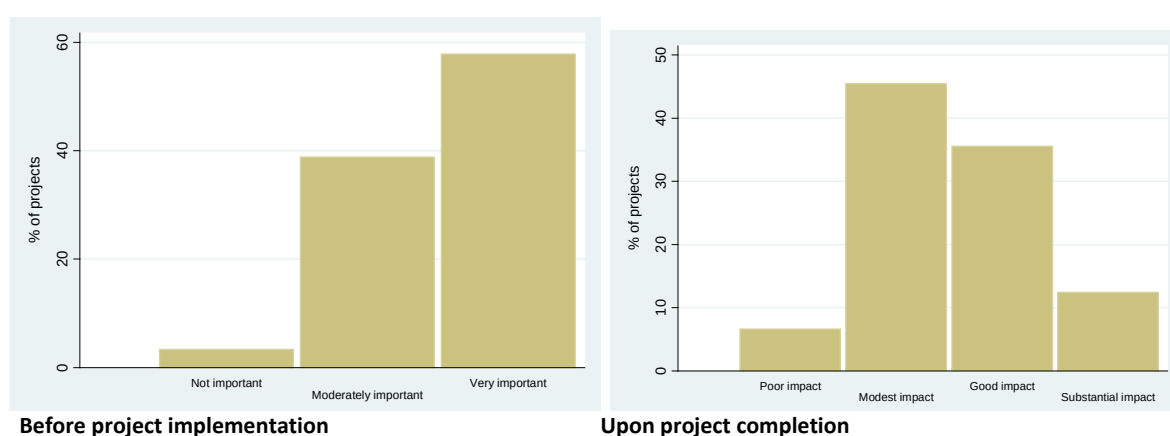
<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

There are several plausible explanations for the absence of a donor coordination effect in the model. Firstly, coordination efforts can be fairly time-consuming and costly, with the *effect of coordination not always matching the expectations and the input*.²⁸⁴ This line of reasoning is supported by descriptive statistics on donor coordination obtained from the survey. Thus, the majority of survey respondents at the

²⁸⁴ Interview # 82, Kabul, 1 December 2009.

onset of the project believed that donor coordination would be useful for project success. However, when the impact of coordination efforts was assessed after the project had been finalized, their assessment of coordination activities (Figure 7.11) was fairly skeptical. Development practitioners interviewed pointed out that after initial enthusiasm to coordinate and collaborate, the costs, time, and ‘unfulfilled promises by the parties involved’ lead to gradual reluctance to undertake coordination efforts²⁸⁵, which in turn led to weak or sometime even adverse²⁸⁶ outcomes.

Figure 7.11 – Perceived importance of donor coordination for project success, before and after project implementation



A second possible explanation for the lack of statistical effect of donor coordination variable is that the quality and intensity of donor coordination efforts *currently practiced were simply not sufficient enough* to bring desirable results and influence project success. ‘With such a plethora of coordinating bodies and mechanisms both on the government and the donor side, it is puzzling how little actual coordination

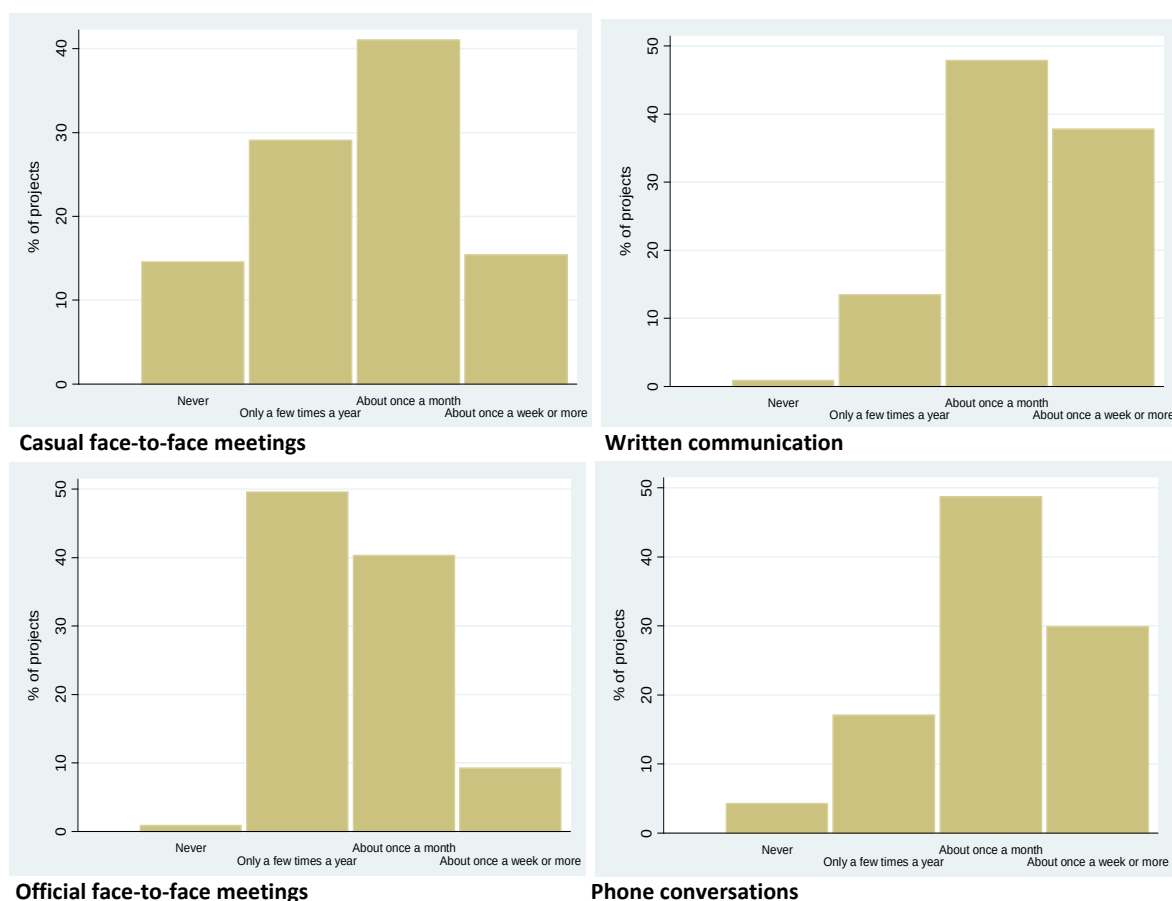
²⁸⁵ Interview # 16, Kabul, 20 September 2009.

²⁸⁶ Interview # 27, Kabul, 6 October 2009.

seems to come out of it'.²⁸⁷ Disappointed by previous outcomes of coordination efforts on the ground, project leaders and project implementation teams might have invested less time and effort in reaching out to other agencies and coordinating.

As shown in Figure 7.12, most of the coordination-related activities and communication were taking place on average only once a month. Phone and written communication, together with casual meetings seem to be the most frequent ways of interaction, but even they were taking place mostly once a month.

Figure 5.12 – Donor coordination modalities and frequency

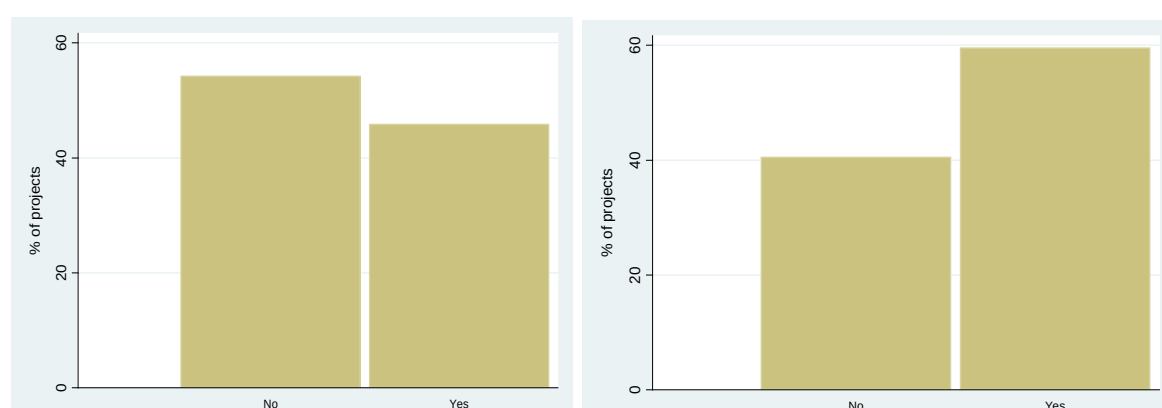


²⁸⁷ UNIFEM Afghanistan Programme Assessment 2009, NORAD, online.

This leads to the third possible explanation of the lack of an effect of donor coordination on project success in our model. It builds upon the accounts of semi-structured interviews^{288 289} in which the majority of development practitioners interviewed argued that the type of coordination exercised at the moment is mainly an ad-hoc coordination efforts agreed upon *after* the project has been conceived and initiated. Coordination at this stage consequently consumes much more time to tune up and agree upon the terms, and sign relevant agreements. Such coordination is also limited in effectiveness by the fact that it cannot at this point feed into project design any more.²⁹⁰

Our descriptive statistics on the types of coordination activities show that most frequently, the purpose of such coordination efforts is aimed at joint funding of aid initiatives, and at project implementation logistics (Figure 7.13). Both these types of collaboration require a thorough consideration and clear distribution and *sequencing* of activities. This is harder to achieve when the projects are already underway.²⁹¹

Figure 7.13 – Perceived importance of donor coordination types

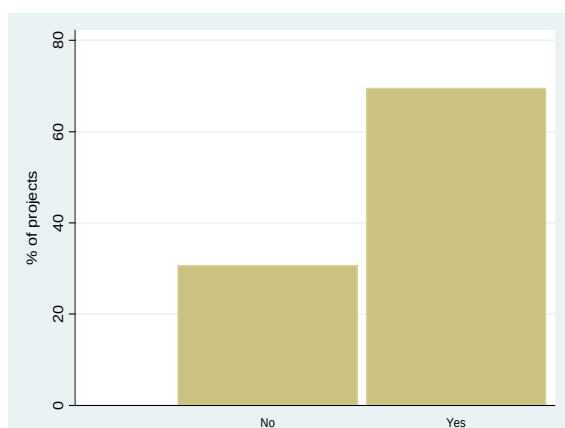
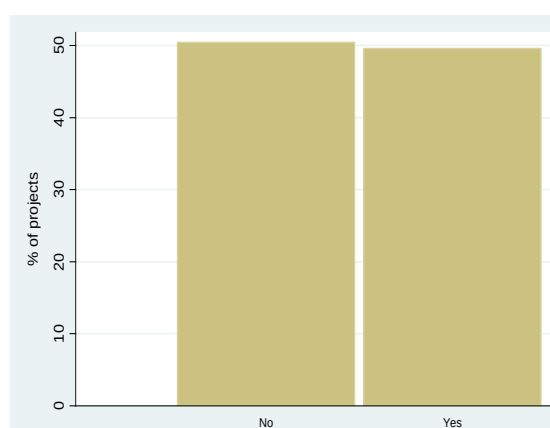
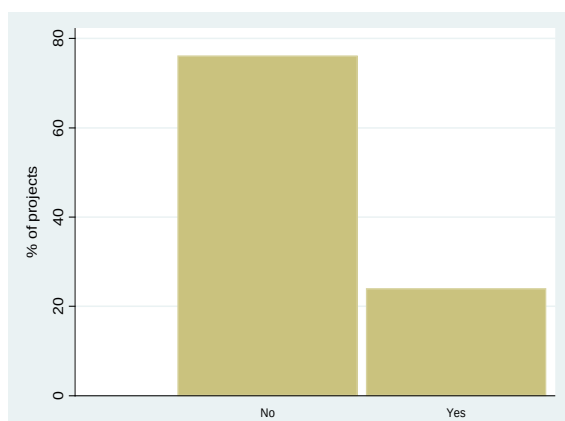


²⁸⁸ Interview # 31, Kabul, 23 October 2009.

²⁸⁹ Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

²⁹⁰ Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009, Interview # 36, Kabul, 24 October 2009.

²⁹¹ Interview # 2, Kabul, 4 September 2009.

Obtaining expertise lacking in-house**Joint funding for an initiative****Implementation logistics****Securing national government's support****Securing the support from other agencies**

The challenges that were said to be hampering successful coordination efforts revolve around two main issues. First, participatory processes may lead to greater complexity and confusion rather than simplicity in project implementation plans. They pose a challenge of compromising on different preferences of implementation, what role and responsibility to give to the national counterpart agency, and how much accountability and reporting to request from the national counterparts.²⁹² Second, all these decisions and compromises take place in a highly politicized environment, where

²⁹² Interview # 57, Kabul, 21 November 2009.

implementing agencies need to report on their implementation and delivery rates,²⁹³ and donor governments need to report on implementation results to their constituencies.

Reporting to donors takes place at the end of each fiscal year, while the complexity of most of the projects allows for visible and reportable results to materialize only at later stages of project implementation. Under such political and time pressures, international implementing agencies are not keen on the potential delays that collaboration and coordination with other partners may cause.²⁹⁴

Aid in some sectors is more politicized than in others and many donor nations are keen to be involved (possibly for the sake of creating a good image or driven by their own domestic and foreign-policy agendas) in the justice sector, security and law enforcement, counter-narcotics, or public administration. Such high interest, while positive in itself, leads to situations where different international actors from many bilateral agencies work in the same sector. Most bilateral development agencies do not have a clear mandate or the legitimacy to coordinate the efforts in certain areas, and at the same time are not keen to be coordinated, which results in a dissonance of approaches, policies, standards and priorities. In some instances, when one international aid agency tries to enforce greater accountability and performance standards with their national counterparts, the national counterpart may not feel compelled to comply, as they know that if one international aid agency withdraws, another will take its place,

²⁹³ Rate of expenditure of funds under project's respective budget lines.

²⁹⁴ Interview # 115, Kabul, 9 December 2009, Interview # 66, Kabul, 27 November 2009.

and maybe even provide greater funds and assistance.²⁹⁵ ‘Undertaking collaboration and coordination efforts under such circumstances *after* the start of bilateral projects is a particularly taxing and unrewarding experience’.²⁹⁶

An experience of two development agencies implementing similar projects in agriculture and livestock sector is a good illustration. Despite good will and attempts to coordinate with each other along the project implementation process, the two entities’ attempts to reduce overlaps and merge funds were not very successful, mainly due to differing bureaucratic regulations and the time it required to clear and introduce changes in project documents, plans, and budgets. As a result, donor funded projects would end up competing with each other, particularly for the time and involvement of a better trained and more competent national counterpart staff.

Coordination among single projects in the same sector is further complicated by the confusion at a higher level among the agencies with the mandate to coordinate activities in a certain sector. This is true of both national and international entities with a coordination mandate. National ministries and agencies often have overlapping mandates (recall the discussion above). On the international side, while the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has the mandate for political and policy coordination, the precise role of UNAMA as opposed to the UN Development

²⁹⁵ Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

²⁹⁶ Interview # 57, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

Programme in Afghanistan in the area of development policy is not very clear, and neither is the role and limits of UNAMA's Special Advisers on Development.²⁹⁷

The coordinating role of other UN specialized agencies with a more in-depth expertise in certain areas (for instance UNIFEM's expertise in gender issues and agency's informal leadership in the gender sector) vs. the UNDP's overall development policy coordination role is not particularly well-defined, either. Therefore, coordination efforts are sometimes not appreciated, and may lead to poor communication and even competition between UN organizations with direct mandates to address issues in the same area.²⁹⁸

Mixed results have flowed from the so-called 'lead nation' approach²⁹⁹ that has been introduced with the intention of putting a single donor nation in charge of coordinating international aid efforts in a particular sector. 'Until recently, no lead nation devoted enough attention or money to the sector under its purview, with the possible exception of Japan for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme and the United States for training of the Afghan National Army'.³⁰⁰ Such an approach is now less prevalent.³⁰¹

The overall record of challenges with donor coordination points suggests that the current approach to coordination on the ground at the stage of project implementation,

²⁹⁷ UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme Evaluation report (2009).

²⁹⁸ Interview # 14, Kabul, 29 September 2009.

²⁹⁹ In such approach, through UNAMA coordination mechanism, a nation with best practices in certain sector would be assigned to lead and coordinate efforts of international players in the said sector. Thus, for instance, Italy acted as a lead nation in Criminal Justice reform, Britain in counter-narcotics and alternative livelihoods, US in security and public administration reform.

³⁰⁰ UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme Evaluation report (2009).

³⁰¹ Interview # 54, Kabul, 14 November 2009.

and the modalities that are predominantly used at the moment are not very rewarding. However, these challenges are discussed not in order to argue that donor coordination at the stage of project implementation is unnecessary, or indeed impossible. The majority of development practitioners in charge of project implementation on the ground stated that coordinated efforts would be better than activities undertaken in isolation, but coordination, if it is to be effective and less taxing, should be agreed upon and spelled out formally and clearly at the stage of project inception and design.³⁰²

Ex-ante donor coordination and formal partnerships

The instances when donor coordination efforts were successful and the parties involved were satisfied with the results were indeed the ones with ex-ante (pre-implementation) coordination efforts and in which collaboration was contractually fixed among the agencies involved.³⁰³ Agreements made at the project design stage, and detailed outline of the approaches and priority activities identified following extensive consultations, served as a common ‘play sheet’ for the international agencies and the national counterparts involved.³⁰⁴ The case of the National Solidarity Programme and collaboration under it is one good example of such pre-implementation consultations and formal agreements.

³⁰² Interview # 83, Kabul, 29 November 2009.

³⁰³ Interview # 72, Kabul, 26 November 2009.

³⁰⁴ Interview # 25, Kabul, 27 October 2009.

Multi-donor trust funds³⁰⁵ and the large-scale sector strategies and programmes they finance serve as a favorable platform for concluding such collaboration agreements and ‘help to organize and harmonize contributions from different donors and agencies in certain sector’.³⁰⁶

Some of the best examples of cooperation between the international organizations took place when both institutions have pursued a joint goal and established a partnership³⁰⁷ in order to achieve their goal. For instance, in a partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) offices in Afghanistan, 87 female and 84 male community health workers were trained on basic hygiene, promoting children's vaccination, basic education on nutrition and promoting the use of midwifery services. UNODC and the World Food Programme (WFP) conducted a Food for Work project to rehabilitate and clear 28 kilometers of canals in Heart province. In one such joint effort, UNAMA, WHO, UNODC, WFP launched a 40-beds ‘Jangalak’ drug treatment center in Kabul, later expanded to over 100 beds. The center, for the first time in Afghanistan, provided drug abuse harm reduction services such as detoxification, rehabilitation, and health education through two national health NGOs funded by the World Bank.

There were also instances of productive cooperation without pre-implementation agreements and forming of formal partnerships between the agencies

³⁰⁵ Interview # 102, Kabul, 2 December 2009, Interview # 88, Kabul, 29 November 2009

³⁰⁶ Interview # 29, Kabul, 28 October 2009, Interview # 4, Kabul, 7 September 2009.

³⁰⁷ Interview # 75, Kabul, 27 November 2009.

active in Afghanistan. Such cases however were attributed by respondents mainly to personalities and initiative of project managers.

The practice of partnerships among several development agencies concluded at the project design stage was frequently mentioned as an example of the best coordination and collaboration experience.³⁰⁸ Several examples of partnerships that came up in the interviews suggest that even in a crowded development scene as described above, it is possible to identify and successfully team up with other agencies that share a common goal and can bring in contributions in the area in which their agency has strong expertise.³⁰⁹ Project-based reconstruction and development aid is more likely to make a meaningful and lasting contribution if projects are linked to longer-term, joint multi-donor sector programmes. Establishing such linkages between individual projects is beyond the mandate of in-country project implementation teams. Such tasks should be performed at the level of donor and implementing agencies headquarters, with continuous discussion and involvement of national governments.³¹⁰

For instance, for the implementation of the World Bank's Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP), which envisaged recruiting some sixty well-qualified Afghan national trained and residing abroad, the World Bank, with the newly created Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) as implementing agency, requested advice and entered into detailed negotiations to establish

³⁰⁸ Interview # 14, Kabul, 11 September 2009, Interview # 25, Kabul, 27 October 2009.

³⁰⁹ Successful projects and effective collaboration under Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, Law and Order Trust Fund Afghanistan as an example.

³¹⁰ Interview # 63, Kabul, 17 November 2009.

management arrangement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Pre-implementation coordination and setting up a partnership with IOM allowed to create and put in place necessary mechanisms and procedures for smooth relocation of selected candidates and the overall implementation of the programme (WB 2007a).

Additionally, partnerships with private sector can facilitate project implementation when one of the project stakeholders has a low capacity (for instance a local community or an NGO). Private sector may have greater expertise in various for profit activities such as for instance community-based employment and income creation. In terms of structure, a clear definition of roles and responsibilities within a partnership is a key (WB 2007b). In case several international agencies are participating, their involvement during project identification enhances project effectiveness. But during implementation, their respective operational policies and procedures need to be harmonized to ensure smooth operation and easy compliance. This is usually best done through a memorandum of understanding³¹¹.

Joint project development – a prerequisite for partnerships – was particularly stressed as an effective mode and tool for successful coordination and synergies.³¹² Projects that were designed jointly and coordinated before implementation started; with roles and responsibilities clearly defined in the project document and cooperation agreements³¹³ are a model of coordination that brings more effective results. They are a powerful tool, but they need to be properly thought out and structured, with all

³¹¹ Interview # 99, Kabul, 1 December 2009, interview # 47, Kabul, 20 November 2009.

³¹² Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

³¹³ Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

stakeholders aware of their roles and responsibilities as well as the synergistic potential of the collaboration³¹⁴.

For instance, initial successful cooperation and joint programme design between a donor embassy in Kabul and a specialized UN agency allowed for the collaboration to grow into a more strategic partnership. Significantly, this included a switch from earmarked funding of single projects to a comprehensive programme approach, with the donor becoming willing to support the totality of the UN agency's country programme for Afghanistan. By means of an advisory board and regular meetings, programme stakeholders maintained a dialogue both on policy and programming (agreeing on reporting formats, time frames, review meetings, participation in monitoring trips), as well as on political backing and important advocacy issues that may require concerted efforts. Such a set up also allowed for timely consideration of necessary revisions or reallocations between projects and programmes when this was needed.

Partnerships were also suggested as the way to address two coordination-related issues we came across while discussing the level of national government's support earlier in this chapter. We mentioned then that multiple mentors for a single entity (without coordination among them), and varying levels of salaries paid to national staff members working in the same thematic area drastically affected project implementation success.

Development practitioners considered partnerships a path for the participating international agencies to balance the supply of mentors, as well as establish a systematic

³¹⁴ Sometimes the terms such as 'technical support', if not fully explained or clarified, leave the partner agency uncertain of what such support entails, what to expect, and how to proceed with the implementation.

pay-grade for national staff members employed in the same thematic area. Some argued that it was impossible for a single agency acting in isolation to successfully complete projects, and withdraw their international project team in a way that does not undermine national capacity built in the course of said project: unless there is coordination with other agencies, such capacity would likely be bought off by other donor agencies.³¹⁵

In this chapter I reviewed the major findings of the study, which pertain to the role of the national government's support, donor coordination on the ground, and project leadership in successful implementation of projects. Quantitative findings were supplemented with qualitative feedback collected in the course of semi-structured interviews with development practitioners in Afghanistan, which provide a real life illustration of the impact these factors have on project success, and how they play out under various circumstances.

The findings presented in this Chapter confirm the hypothesis on the positive role the national government's support plays for the effective implementation of projects, considerably increasing the likelihood of projects to achieve their set objectives. We also learned that project leadership (management) on the international project implementation plays a key role in project success. Moreover, a high level of national government's support combined with strong project leadership increases projects' chances for success, and leads to the highest levels of accomplishment. Finally,

³¹⁵ UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme evaluation report (2009a). Interview # 12, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

the findings of this Chapter suggest that donor coordination at the stage of project implementation does not play an important positive role for the successful project implementation. Rather, the findings show that in order to have a positive impact, donor coordination efforts should be undertaken *before* the initiation of a project, with collaboration agreements and approaches to implementation formalized in a detailed joint agreement.

CHAPTER VIII

Additional Explanations of Project Success

This chapter presents the findings on the rest of the factors included in the explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development. As with the major findings of the study discussed in the previous chapter, quantitative data analysis results on the influence of remaining factors included in the model was backed up with accounts of past experience as relates to each particular factor. The chapter will close with general conclusions comprising the findings on all project success factors included in the model.

Project Design Characteristics

8.1 Project Complexity

Projects vary considerably in the sectors they focus on and the objectives they set. For instance, the sectors of intervention may range from rehabilitation and rural development to public administration or healthcare capacity building, and projects may consist of a single construction and provision of equipment component, or have multiple objectives such as personnel training, procurement of supplies and means of transportation, legal aid, and infrastructure construction.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

To test whether such variation in the complexity of objectives and tasks makes some projects more straightforward and easier to implement than others, and thus influences the project implementation success, I posed a hypothesis which states that higher complexity, i.e. projects with larger capacity building component, will be negatively correlated with project success.

We took capacity building tasks as a proxy for project complexity based on accounts in the literature which characterized capacity building initiatives as fairly fluid and flexible tasks (Israel 1987) which makes them harder to implement. Capacity building goes hand-in-hand with institution building efforts and implies not only the training of competent personnel, but also creating administrative and managerial mechanisms within ministries, and setting up regulatory frameworks for self-sustainable policy-making and executive functioning after the project life span. In post-conflict reconstruction and development programmes, capacity building is often a component in a mix of activities under a single project.³¹⁷

Our statistical data analysis provides some evidence on the negative impact of high project complexity on project success (Table 8.1). Bivariate regression tests mainly generated negative coefficients, but failed to achieve statistical significance. Multivariate ordered probit test yielded a negative coefficient at the $p < 0.1$ significance level, while multinomial logit test results indicate that projects with higher complexity are less likely to fall into 'Highly successful' category of projects rather than into 'Moderately

³¹⁷ Of the total number of projects in the dataset, 31 % of projects had between 0-30% of capacity building activities, 37 % of projects between 31- 40 % category, and 32 % of the projects had 50 to 100 % of capacity building share of project activities.

successful' category, also at the $p < 0.1$ significance level. Such findings resonate with the results of the study by Israel (1987), which shows that capacity building projects are more complex, and that complexity has a negative correlation with project success.

Table 8.1

Relationship between Complexity and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
15.529	-0.002	-0.002	-0.004	-0.007	0.0006	-0.023

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Complexity and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
-0.005	-0.009*	0.030	0.005	-0.003	-0.070*

Such somewhat inconclusive results might also suggest that a measure of a project's capacity building component, while being closest proxy for project complexity in our opinion, is still not optimal measure of project complexity. This assumption stemmed from the feedback of semi-structured interviews. Development practitioners interviewed indeed confirmed that capacity building was a rather fluid task, required a high degree of flexibility, and did not provide many 'blue-prints' for activities. However, some of the putatively 'clear-cut' project objectives, such as for instance construction of premises, prove similarly complex and difficult to implement under conditions of the low technical capacity of national architects and engineers available in Afghanistan.

Engineering designs required repeated revisions, construction plans could not be

called ‘clear-cut’ as they often did not take into account the climate and terrain of the construction location, and thus required as much flexibility and adjustment of the implementation plans along the way as a complex capacity building project would have required.³¹⁸ That is, the actual project complexity, i.e. how hard it is to implement a certain project, depends on the quality and competence of the specialists that are available to implement such projects.

By the same logic, and on the subject of project complexity in more general terms (not limited to the project’s capacity building component), many development practitioners interviewed saw the main negative impact of project complexity through the angle of the national counterpart agency’s weak ability to cope with such complexity and deliver up to the expectations. They pointed out that more complex projects required higher levels of proficiency and competence of the national project implementation teams. And if the national project implementation team is not fully up to the task, the overall quality of the national government’s support to the project implementation process declines due to the national counterpart team members’ perceived lack of expertise and consequent reluctance to take initiative. Such dynamics were mainly observed in projects with multiple objectives and with more complicated tasks which were harder to implement, when the national partner agency did not have sufficient skill, capacity or resources to tackle the tasks at hand and would lag behind with the implementation, or deliver to lower standards than expected.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Interview # 51, Kabul, 21 November 2009.

³¹⁹ Interview # 50, Kabul, 21 November 2009.

A complex mix of several project components is unavoidable if a project is to be meaningful, useful, and effective. Given the complex needs in virtually every area of development in Afghanistan, having just a construction project or just a training project would have little impact and sustainability if other related needs are not considered and addressed. In other words, projects that are not complex would have little use. In this context a 'hardware and software' approach in the project was suggested as an optimal way of delivering development aid. 'Similar to the principle of Maslow's pyramid of needs'³²⁰, first all material tools, including buildings, furniture, equipment needs to be provided, and only then training, structural reforms, and policy advice should be delivered.³²¹ 'It is important to teach best practices, introduce good governance concepts, provide professional training, but first one needs to provide for basic tangible means so that there conditions and facilities to absorb and apply the substantive concepts and training in a meaningful, sustainable way.'³²²

Such a gradual and structured approach to project objectives was also better understood and tackled by the national counterpart team. It allowed national managers to carefully identify and outsource specific technical skills that were not available or were of low quality on the local market.³²³ National counterpart colleagues interviewed pointed out that pursuing more substantive project objectives before or in conjunction with providing required basics material tools and conditions for operation would have

³²⁰ UNODC Project Evaluation Report (2008). Anonymous, on file with author.

³²¹ Interview # 21, Kabul, 1 October 2009, Interview # 12, Kabul, 18 September 2009.

³²² Interview # 99, Kabul, 1 December 2009.

³²³ Interview # 47, Kabul, 20 November 2009.

been a demanding and somehow confusing task.³²⁴ A gradual approach made it easier to grasp the logic of project objectives and related activities, plus it gave time for the national counterpart team to become more proficient working on this very project and be better prepared to address more substantive, complex project objectives.³²⁵

These were the findings on project complexity factor. In the next section I will present the findings for the area of coverage factor.

8.2 Coverage Area

Based on the accounts in literature, I posed a hypothesis to test whether a wider geographic coverage of a project is negatively correlated with project success.³²⁶ The results of statistical tests did not provide much support for this hypothesis. In fact, the only statistically significant result ($p < 0.05$) – of the bivariate multinomial logit test – indicates that projects with wider coverage tend to fall into the ‘Highly successful’ category of projects rather than into ‘Moderately successful category’ (Table 8.2).

Lacking conclusive and robust statistical results I rely on the feedback of the semi-structured interviews in order to better understand the influence of the coverage area on project implementation and project success.

³²⁴ Interview # 29, Kabul, 23 October 2009.

³²⁵ Interview # 49, Kabul, 21 November 2009, Interview # 33, Kabul, 25 October 2009.

³²⁶ The indicator of coverage in the dataset had a mean of 10 provinces, with a standard deviation of 12. Almost 30 % of projects covered a single province, with about 60 % of the projects covering between 1 to 5 provinces. A little over 21 % of projects were country-wide projects.

Table 8.2 - Relationship between Coverage Area and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
13.443	0.009	0.01	0.008	0.023	0.001	0.059**

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Coverage Area and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
-0.012	-0.013	0.003	0.012	-0.014	0.420

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

A major opinion that emerged in the discussions was that if a wide coverage area was to influence project success, it would be not because of the actual size of the area and the population to be covered. Rather, the larger number of implementation staff involved in various provinces, would make direct frequent contact with staff difficult to achieve.

Similarly, frequent site visits for monitoring and follow up would be a logistically complicated task. The latter was particularly true of remote mountainous project implementation sites, and sites with poor road infrastructure.

The support and capacity of provincial counterparts, whether it be the Governor of a province or the Provincial Directorate of a national counterpart agency, varies from province to province and requires time and the effort of the project implementation

team to understand and adjust project management and implementation styles to each particular circumstances of all the provinces involved in the project.³²⁷

These variations in accessibility, capacity level of the national provincial counterpart, and climatic conditions, leads to situations when project activities are well underway in one province and lagging behind in another. Such an imbalance is particularly obvious in the earlier stages of project implementation³²⁸, but with strong and wise management by the international project team and support of the national counterparts in localities, imbalances in implementation rates normally level out at the later stages of project implementation.

If problems persist and project activities in a certain province continue to fail, then depending on what were the reasons for failure³²⁹, the 'project manager can and should revise the project document to suspend activities on the said site. Such revision should be a tripartite discussion among donor, international implementing agency team, and national counterpart agency, and can rechannel the funds to the sites where assistance under the project would have better impact'.³³⁰ Ideally, such negative experience becomes a learning opportunity, and the information is disseminated among the international aid community. However, often such valuable information remains in-

³²⁷ Interview # 63, Kabul, 4 November 2009, Interview # 38, Kabul, 15 October 2009.

³²⁸ Interview # 48, Kabul, 11 November 2009.

³²⁹ If the reasons for continued failure of project activities are such that addressing them will take longer than a project life span, they are reflected in the project implementation final report (as 'lessons learned'), in the evaluation report, and are to be taken into consideration should a next phase of project, or a similar project be designed undertaken.

³³⁰ Interview # 49, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

house, 'for technical, but mostly for political reasons and reputation concerns of the parties involved, and other aid agencies repeat the same negative experience'.³³¹

Recalling the experience of successful projects with multiple project implementation locations, respondents cited the importance of having a field office (whether of the international agency or of the national counterpart agency) available in the provinces covered by the project. This, in fact, was an unspoken requirement for some international agencies before initiating a project in a certain province. A field office was seen as a means for reliable information on the potential pitfalls for project implementation in a certain site at the onset of the project, and as a guarantee of better communication for management throughout the project implementation cycle.³³²

In this section I have reviewed the findings of the analysis and interpretation of the data for the area of coverage factor. The next section will discuss what role the size of the project budget plays in the effective project implementation.

8.3 Project Budget

Our hypothesis postulates that bigger project budgets are negatively correlated with project success, as such projects are likely to be more complex, harder to implement, and therefore less likely to succeed.

Contrary to the findings of the study conducted by Manza (2008) in which the author shows that larger project budgets (as well as lengthy project durations, a factor I

³³¹ Interview # 63, Kabul, 4 November 2009, Interview # 50, Kabul, 18 November 2009.

³³² Interview # 32, Kabul, 25 October 2009

discuss next) tend to negatively affect project success, our results show no negative relationship between project budget size³³³ and project success (Table 8.3).

The most likely reason for such variation in results is that Manza analyzed solely infrastructure and construction projects implemented by the US military and its sub-contractors in Iraq, in war zone conditions and without the involvement of a national counterpart agency. Under such very specific circumstances, and with projects of that particular nature, it is understandable that smaller, more manageable budgets were more successful than the ones which took longer to implement, making project activities more vulnerable to dire insecurity conditions.

Table 8.3

Relationship between Budget and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
11.809	4.4E-11	2.6E-10	9.5E-10	1.4E-09	-4.1E-09	5E-09

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Budget and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
-2.56e-09	-2.89e-09	-9.16E-09	-3.01E-09	-1.13E-08	1.37E-08

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

³³³ The minimum budget among the projects observed was 400 hundred thousand US dollars, the maximum 296 million US dollars. The mean of the budgets observed was 31 million US dollars, with a standard deviation of 48 million US dollars.

‘It is natural that complex development projects in post-conflict reconstruction require adequately substantive budgets in order to successfully address the complex needs and achieve project objectives’. Large budgets and related major financial flows and operations, no doubt, require competent and strict financial management. In several instances when projects with large budgets went through the national execution modality (NEX) in which the national counterpart agency was the main implementing body and the Ministry of Finance was the executing agency in charge of administrative and fiduciary functions, the transparency, accountability and the issue of management capacity in the government have proven controversial, severely hampering the progress in the project implementation.³³⁴ The case of the Counter-narcotics Trust Fund I have reviewed earlier is a good illustration of such situation and consequent poor outcomes.

The possible relationship between project budget size and project success mainly lies in the assumption that a large project budget is a more complex project, harder to implement. ‘As long as there is a competent administrative and management project team handling financial operations, the size of the budget on its own has little relation to implementation success rate, because a competent team will manage small and large budgets equally well, and a weak team can mismanage relatively small budgets equally as it can mismanage large budgets’.³³⁵

³³⁴ Interview # 95, Kabul, 6 December 2009.

³³⁵ Interview # 86, Kabul, 26 November 2009, Interview # 9, Kabul, 15 September 2009.

8.4 Duration

To test for the possible impact of project duration on project success as suggested in the literature, I posed a hypothesis which states that lengthy project duration is negatively correlated with project success, since projects of longer duration are more likely to be affected by insecure conditions on the ground, warlords and insurgency.

Again, contrary to the findings of the study by Manza (2008), our results show no proof of the negative correlation between the variable of project duration and project success. Moreover, there is some evidence of a positive correlation, with the positive coefficient of a bivariate multinomial regression test at $p < 0.1$ significance level, and positive coefficient of the multivariate linear and ordered probit regressions tests both at $p < 0.05$ significance level. The multivariate multinomial logit regression tests indicates, at $p < 0.01$ statistical significance level, that lengthier projects are more likely to become 'Highly successful' than 'Moderately successful'. However, while significant, the results are not consistent throughout all regression tests and are therefore not very robust.

Table 8.4 - Relationship between Project Duration and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
4.303	0.003	0.003	0.032	0.036	0.014	0.067*

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Project Duration and Project Success (multivariate test)

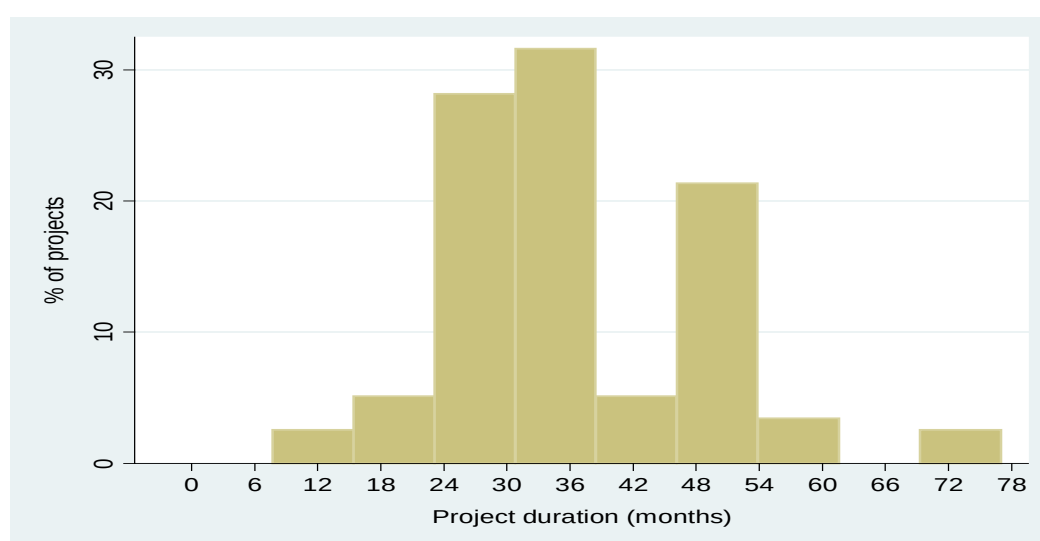
Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.029**	0.029**	-0.013	0.058	0.044	0.218***

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Descriptive statistics for the project duration indicator (Figure 8.5) show that almost 60 percent of the projects in the dataset are projects with the duration between two to three years.

‘It takes time to understand and adjust to the circumstances under which a new project is going to be implemented, and build a relationship with the national counterparts and project beneficiaries. A minimum of two-three years is required to make a meaningful impact through a project’. Longer-term projects are usually the ones that were either extended or continued through the design of a second phase, both of which can happen either when a project faced difficulties and required more time to accomplish its objectives, or if a project was deemed successful and a decision was made between the donors, the international implementing agency, and national counterparts to extend such a project. This might be another reason why our statistical results on correlation between duration and project success are somehow inconclusive.

Figure 8.5 - Project duration indicators



The duration of the project is decided on by project design team based on the estimate complexity of the tasks at hand, with multifaceted projects involving activities in more than one area (construction, training, procurement of equipment, etc) usually requiring longer periods to implement. The longer duration of the project per se does not influence project success, but the implied complexity of longer-term projects may play a role in how successfully the project is implemented.

These were the findings on the project duration factor. The following several sections will focus on project's logistic and operational characteristics and features such as adequate personnel, monitoring and evaluation, rest and recuperation cycle, and the assistance received from a Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Logistic and Operational Characteristics and Features

8.5 Adequate Personnel

Moving on to the analysis of the factors in this group, we start with the evaluation of the correlation between the factor of adequate staff and project success. I already indirectly touched upon the importance of adequate personnel earlier in this chapter's discussion, when I analyzed the influence of national government support, project complexity, and budget on project success. In that context, the role of adequate personnel was mainly seen in terms of capacity and professional competence of the national and international project implementation team members and their ability to perform their respective functions up to the standards.

For an in-depth analysis of the personnel factor, I posed a hypothesis which postulates that adequate personnel would be positively correlated with project success. In testing this hypothesis, I take into account not only the professional competence level of the project staff, but also the number of available staff members, their administrative skills, and their understanding of the roles and tasks they performed under the project as evaluated by survey respondents. A cumulative score of all these indicators was taken as a measure of adequate project personnel, and tested for its correlation with project success.

Statistical tests provide good evidence in support of our hypothesis (Table 8.6). Chi-square tests, and hypothesis tests over bivariate linear and ordered probit coefficients all achieved significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. The bivariate multinomial logit model indicates (at $p < 0.1$ significance level) that projects with more adequate personnel were more likely to become 'Highly successful', rather than 'Moderately successful', while multivariate logit test that projects with adequate personnel are less likely to become 'Unsuccessful' instead of 'Moderately successful', with a negative coefficient significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 8.6

Relationship between Adequate Personnel and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
24.010**	0.377**	0.355**	-0.447	0.132	0.388	1.00*

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Adequate Personnel and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.176	0.242	-1.638**	-0.330	-0.228	0.382

<0.01 ***

<0.05**

<0.1*

There is reason to believe that it was particularly important to include in our measure of adequate staff an indicator of whether the number of staff available for project implementation was sufficient: ‘the amounts of aid given for post-conflict reconstruction and development are usually large while attracting competent employees is hampered by post-conflict field conditions in such duty stations, which frequently results in aid management and delivery structures being spread thinly, with managers and personnel of the projects covering multiple projects’.³³⁶ The issue of understaffing and shortage of personnel to perform various project implementation functions and its undermining effect on project implementation process and team morale was a common thread in most of the semi- structured interviews.

Poor security and harsh living conditions, together with restrictions on family members to join the staff members in their duty stations³³⁷ make it harder to attract competent personnel despite generous remuneration and benefits package offered by the international aid agencies.

³³⁶ Interview # 52, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

³³⁷ As per the rules of the UN and other major aid agencies, in countries below a certain security level, family members of the employees are restricted from arriving and residing in the duty station due to potential safety and security hazard.

Staff shortages caused by a lack of security are further complicated by a prolonged and bureaucratic recruitment process, especially within the UN system organizations.³³⁸ The recruitment process at most of the UN agencies is lengthy, and often involves review and approval of candidates at HQs, with on average a 2-4 month period between the moment a candidate is selected and recruitment and deployment. In the attempt to address such unacceptable recruitment turnaround times, agencies announced generic vacancies for various thematic areas in order to create a roster of interviewed and assessed candidates preapproved for direct fast-track hiring, an effort that respondents said has gradually remedied the situation.³³⁹

Insufficient numbers of international project personnel dedicated solely to the objectives of a certain project leads to a buildup of a backlog of tasks, prolonged implementation timeframes, and excessive strain on personnel, which in turn can result in a declining quality of performance. In consequence, projects under-staffed in this fashion face additional complications in keeping up with the work plan; they encounter more frequent misunderstandings and tensions with the national counterparts, while the quality of implementation and monitoring slides, all of which reflects negatively on the implementation success.³⁴⁰

Many would argue that ensuring that the project implementation team is staffed with a sufficient number of competent personnel is the responsibility of the project

³³⁸ For instance, at the beginning of the year with the 2010 budget coming into effect, UNAMA had a vacancy rate of 44%. The situation had reached a point where the SRSG felt obliged to alert the Security Council that if the staffing backlog were to continue, UNAMA would not be able to implement key elements of its mandate.

³³⁹ Interview # 58, Kabul, 21 November 2009, Interview # 31, Kabul, 3 October 2009.

³⁴⁰ Interview # 113, Kabul, 9 December 2009.

manager. In practice, there were instances when ‘even most effective project managers, who realized the importance of a strong team for successful project implementation, were dependent on circumstances of insecurity and bureaucratic hurdles and struggled to timely assemble an adequate international team’.³⁴¹ ‘Sometimes project managers have to spend a considerable amount of time and effort justifying to the managers in the headquarters the need to hire additional personnel, and may still get no approval’.³⁴²

We have discussed earlier the issue of professional aptitude and capacity of the national counterpart project staff in relation to the quality of the national government’s support to project objectives. This issue resonated in discussions on adequate project personnel as well, particularly regarding administrative skills.³⁴³ National counterpart team members at both the central and provincial levels required substantial training and support in areas ranging from understanding what a project is, project budgeting, debit and credit, to writing proposals, project cycle management, and the assessment of outcomes. The meaning of the concepts of sustainability, and the implications of effectiveness and efficiency, the concepts of monitoring and evaluation and gender mainstreaming were often new and required meticulous introduction and promotion through trainings and distribution of specially-prepared manuals and guidelines.³⁴⁴ Introducing and enforcing good administrative practices from scratch was initially a time-consuming and demanding task, but did improve the overall quality of

³⁴¹ Interview # 115, Kabul, 9 December 2009.

³⁴² Interview # 57, Kabul, 21 November 2009.

³⁴³ Interview # 3, Kabul, 6 September 2009, Interview # 66, Kabul, 27 November 2009.

³⁴⁴ Interview # 72, Kabul, 26 November 2009.

performance, and brought positive results early enough in the project implementation cycle for the project to benefit.³⁴⁵

Administrative and management concepts that would be new and foreign to national counterpart team members would not always ‘stick’ and grow within their teams. In consequence, there was a need for close monitoring and follow-up by the international project staff, which in turn reduced the contribution the national counterpart team could make to project implementation, and increased the share of tasks to be accomplished by the international project team. This was not an optimal project implementation arrangement. It negatively reflected on the success of project implementation, mainly in terms of the time required to achieve certain project objectives, but also in terms of the capacity built and left within the national counterpart agency upon project completion.³⁴⁶ To illustrate, a financial reporting template was introduced to the finance unit at one of the counterpart agencies for a more systematic record-keeping and faster reporting. It was seemingly well received and understood in the course of the training seminar provided on the application of the template. Despite this, two month after the completion of the training it turned out that budget records within the ministry are being kept in the same old way. Following repeated visits to the finance unit of one of the international project team members, in the course of which the template was filled in jointly with the national colleagues, the new record keeping style was used occasionally in parallel with the old system. In times

³⁴⁵ Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009, Interview # 53, Kabul, 22 November 2009.

³⁴⁶ Interview # 26, Kabul, 5 October 2009.

of producing financial reports to donors, the reports in accordance with the new reporting style would be comprised jointly. With the departure of the international implementation team's finance expert, the new record keeping template was not referred to on the grounds that the old style was adequate and sufficient to the operations of the given ministry³⁴⁷.

In another similar instance, the rules of a bilateral aid agency required that procurement process be initiated upon the receipt of an official request from the national counterpart agency. The national counterparts made a verbal request for a procurement of equipment, but did not file such a request in written, reportedly because of the lack of English language and computer skills. The national counterparts continued requesting the procurement of the equipment in the course of the conversations and meetings however. As a result, the international project implementation team was forced to file the request by themselves and to themselves, from an email account of the national counterpart agency that both the ministry and the international project team had access to. This example illustrates the choices international project staff members occasionally have to make, deciding between implementation stalemate vs. moving ahead while 'cutting some corners'.³⁴⁸

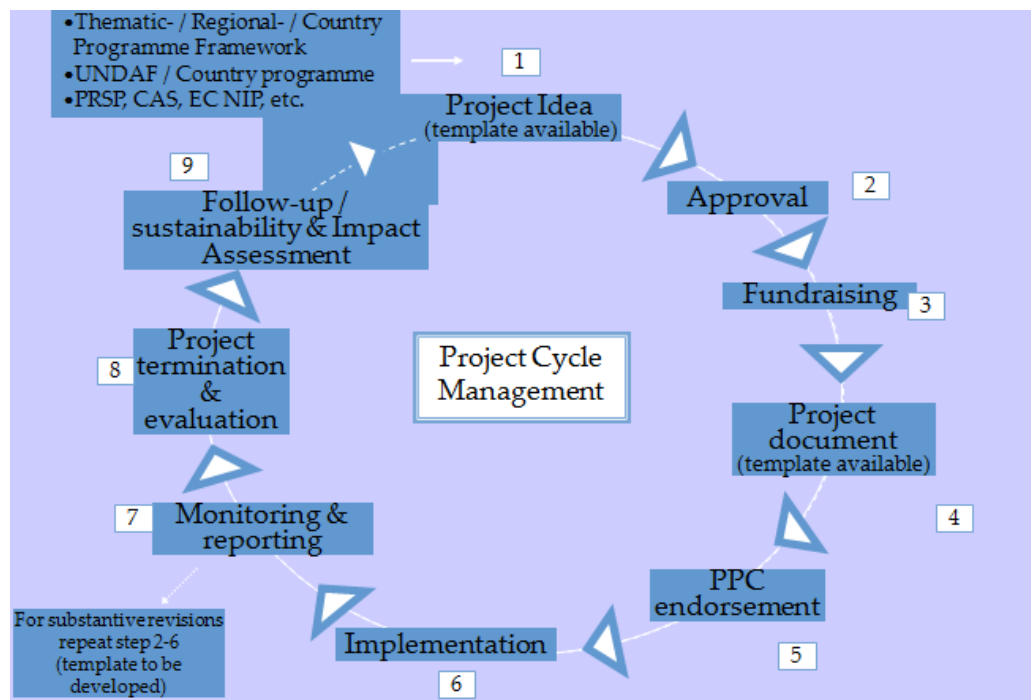
³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Interview # 25, Kabul, 27 October 2009, interview # 4, Kabul, 7 September 2009, Interview # 102, Kabul, 2 December 2009.

8.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Numerous accounts in the literature argue for the importance of strong and regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices for the success of aid and development projects and programmes. Similar to the factor of donor coordination I discussed above, monitoring and evaluation activities can be fairly time-consuming and thus costly. This often leads project managers to carefully weigh costs and benefits of various M&E practices. The main M&E tools, which are embedded in the project management cycle (Figure 8.7), are the mid-term and final project evaluations, both to be conducted by independent project evaluation teams.

Figure 8.7



Source: Project Cycle Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (Eckert 2006)

In addition to mid-term and final evaluations, each project is usually required to submit a template Quarterly progress report for the attention of the HQs. Quarterly reports are

also available for viewing by project personnel and the newly arrived project staff. This contributes to the continuity of activities and the build-up of institutional memory within the organization, since the reports reflect on the challenges faced and methodologies used to address them.

The practice of continuous monitoring and reporting against work-plan benchmarks and timelines, as well as bi-monthly reporting exercises are two additional tools available for M&E. Whether they are used is often at the discretion of the project management team, and the decision may depend both on the need, and on the availability of resources.

To test whether M&E plays an important role for project implementation success, I posed a hypothesis, stating that strong M&E practice is positively correlated with project success. To create an objective measure of the quality of M&E within each project I relied on the cumulative score of all four possible types of M&E mechanisms used within the agencies under consideration (please see Chapter VI on Data Composition and Quality, Table 6.12)³⁴⁹.

Table 8.8

Relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
32.554***	1.657***	1.593***	-2.820*	-4.158**	1.007	2.361**

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

³⁴⁹ A little over 40% of the projects included in this study practiced continuous monitoring, only 16% - formal bi-monthly self-evaluation, 50% - formal quarterly self-evaluation, and 84% of the projects conducted a mid-term evaluations by an Independent Evaluation Unit.

Relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.666	0.807	-3.484	-3.147	0.614	1.859

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Statistical tests provide some evidence in support of our hypothesis. Bivariate tests indicate a strong relationship between the quality of the monitoring and evaluation practice and project success (Table 8.8). The chi-square test is highly significant, and OLS coefficients are positive and significant ($p < 0.01$). Multinomial logit tests suggest that projects with stronger M&E practices were less likely to become ‘Unsuccessful’ or ‘Moderately unsuccessful’ ($p < 0.1$ and $p < 0.05$ respectively), and more likely to become ‘Highly successful’ ($p < 0.05$). However, the results of our multivariate tests did not support such a trend, producing similar coefficients as the bivariate tests, but failing to achieve statistical significance. I argue that good M&E is quite likely to be closely related with other desirable project characteristics. Then, most likely, bivariate tests overstate the effect of M&E due to omitted variable bias, while power is not sufficient in the multivariate model to obtain a significant estimate. Careful analysis of the qualitative information collected for this study is therefore particularly important. The feedback from the semi-structured interviews provides detail on the importance and benefits of M&E as well as the potential challenges and related draw-backs. Most respondents mentioned M&E as a priority that should be integrated into project design. Explicit targets and quantitative indicators integrated in the project document to serve

as an orientation post in the planning and implementation, and in the measurement of the progress later in the process. However, this is not the usual practice, and the benchmarks and baselines that usually should be obtained through a pre-project survey are not there. Also, applying a standardized monitoring and evaluation template was less intuitive and detailed than relying on an M&E framework tailored to project objectives and components. Specially designed frameworks, defined in relation to clear, realistic project objectives were also rarely available and included in the project document³⁵⁰. When a project was funded by several donors, such specially designed common results framework increased the manageability of project and donor accountability.

A combination of continuous monitoring of the benchmarks and quarterly reporting was the most useful combination of M&E during project implementation, since it allowed for timely fine-tuning and advanced preparation for upcoming implementation activities. A system for ongoing monitoring was a necessary part of the successful and smooth implementation of project activities, and that its absence could be the project's greatest flaw. Ideally, and bearing in mind the relationship with donors, in addition to continuous monitoring and quarterly reporting, a strong M&E practice would include regular tripartite review meetings of donor representatives, the implementing agency, and the national counterparts and project beneficiaries.³⁵¹

Establishing and maintaining an ongoing M&E practice of high quality does require a substantial investment of time. To a large degree, it depends on the availability

³⁵⁰ Interview # 99, Kabul, 1 December 2009, interview # 47, Kabul, 20 November 2009, interview # 29, Kabul, 28 October 2009.

³⁵¹ Interview # 29, Kabul, 28 October 2009, Interview # 83, Kabul, 29 November 2009.

of a detailed work-plan against which progress can be tracked.³⁵² The availability of clear implementation work-plans, the quality of established M&E practice within the project, and the degree to which it is adhered to, considerably depends on the project leader. I have noted, statistically pinpointed, and discussed this pattern earlier in the discussion on project leadership.³⁵³

Monitoring and evaluation can turn from a useful management tool into a burdensome bureaucratic procedure that absorbs an excessive amount of time and effort. Respondents stressed that this challenge arises when reporting requirements proliferate.

For instance, projects may very well have to report to HQs, to management to missions visiting the country office, and to each of the donors that contribute resources.³⁵⁴ ‘Most of the donors require quarterly reports, some practice semi-annual reporting, a few require bi-monthly reports, and some required to produce financial reports as frequently as weekly. No two donor reports are alike, and transaction costs are high’.³⁵⁵

When reporting is required too frequently, it is ‘devastatingly time-consuming and distracts from substantive concerns, as it tends to reorient the focus on inputs rather than the results, making it heavily output and activity based, instead of outcome-oriented’. The majority of successful projects addressed the issue of multiple reporting requests through streamlining the generation of reports within a computer-based

³⁵² Interview # 72, Kabul, 26 November 2009.

³⁵³ The relationship between the quality of project leadership and the quality of M&E was discussed and proved statistically earlier in the discussion on project leadership factor, under Hypothesis 16, page 159.

³⁵⁴ Interview # 88, Kabul, 29 November 2009, Interview # 14, Kabul, 11 September 2009.

³⁵⁵ Interview # 25, Kabul, 27 October 2009.

template and further minor adjustment of the reports to the needs of a particular donor by a reporting officer assigned from among the project implementation team.³⁵⁶

Similar to continuous monitoring and quarterly reporting, the aim of formal mid-term evaluations is to improve the management and implementation of the project. However it aims to do so with a longer-term perspective, i.e. through the remainder of the project's lifetime. Such evaluations are more in-depth and substantive. Since they are conducted by independent evaluators who are outsiders to the project, they allow the project implementation and management team to use the lessons learned to improve the planning, design, and management of future projects. 'A midterm evaluation is a good chance to turn a less than successful project around during its second half, and make a project that is going well even more successful, more cost effective'.³⁵⁷

Among the potential challenges for successful midterm evaluations is their proper timing. In several instances, midterm evaluations were undertaken more than six months later than the middle of the project implementation process. Such delays are usually caused by 'an erroneous and self-deceiving decision of the project leader and project management team to adhere more closely to the spirit of the word 'midterm' rather than its meaning'. In other words, in these instances, 'the midterm evaluation is conducted not in the middle of the project implementation calendar, but when it is perceived that half of project objectives have been accomplished'.³⁵⁸ Given the breadth and depth of findings midterm evaluations usually have to offer, these several months of

³⁵⁶ Interview # 4, Kabul, 7 September 2009, Interview # 102, Kabul, 2 December 2009.

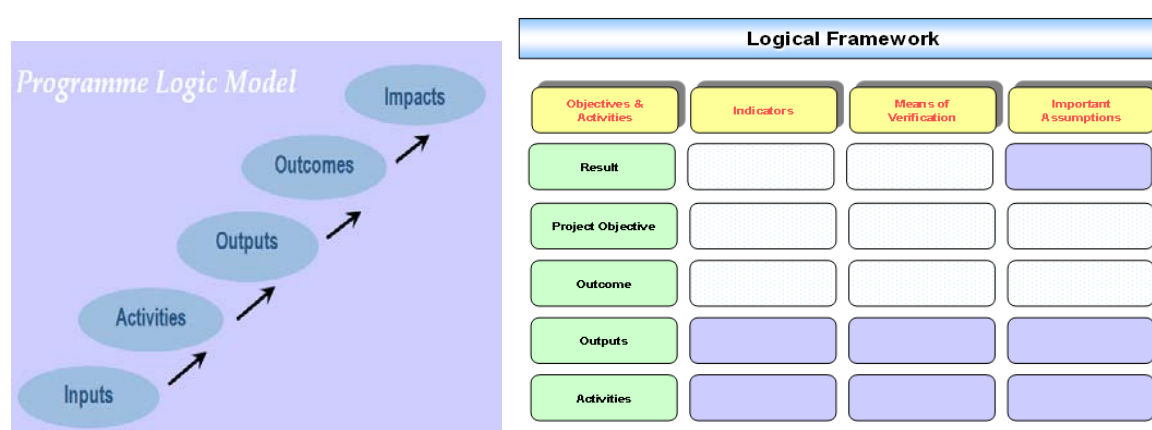
³⁵⁷ Interview # 24, Kabul, 5 October 2009.

³⁵⁸ Interview # 85, Kabul, 30 November 2009.

delay represent a lost opportunity to remedy shortfalls in performance and achieve greater project success.^{359 360}

Any of the types of evaluation of project outcomes and the assessment of impact starts with a correct project design, with correct logical framework (Figure 6.9), and a work-plan that is built upon this logical framework.

Table 8.9 – Project Evaluation Logical Framework



Source: Project Cycle Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (Eckert 2006)

However, surprisingly often projects - in the way they were designed and approved at HQs - failed to meet internationally accepted norms as to what constitutes a valid logical framework, thus hampering project progress evaluation, which ultimately negatively reflected on successful project fine-tuning and implementation. The lack of effective M&E system also hampers using performance-based criteria in the allocation of

³⁵⁹ Interview # 78, Kabul, 27 November 2009.

³⁶⁰ Interview # 26, Kabul, 27 October 2009.

future resources, or selecting contract partners based on their past performance.³⁶¹ ‘A work plan with clear time-lines, which is based on a correctly designed logical framework, is a key management tool. The lack of such a plan in the course of the project implementation denied the review of time frame estimates, assumptions and carrying out rigorous analysis of the inter-relationship of activities and outputs across project components to identify sequential and parallel activities that could have helped to expedite project delivery’.³⁶²

Another potential complication in achieving M&E of high quality is the difficulty in physically verifying some of the project activities, when projects are implemented in remote areas and under difficult security conditions. The infrequency of physical inspection is particularly dangerous for project success when the implementation of certain activities under the project are sub-contracted to an NGO or a private contractor, especially in light of allegations of private sub-contractors’ non-uniform standards and of the compromises private companies engage in, in order to save on costs.³⁶³

8.7 Rest and Recuperation

Our hypothesis postulates that the rest and recuperation cycle will be negatively correlated with project success. Its premise rests upon the potential of frequent and for

³⁶¹ Interview # 30, Kabul, 23 October 2009, Interview # 71, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

³⁶² Interview # 4, Kabul, 4 September 2009.

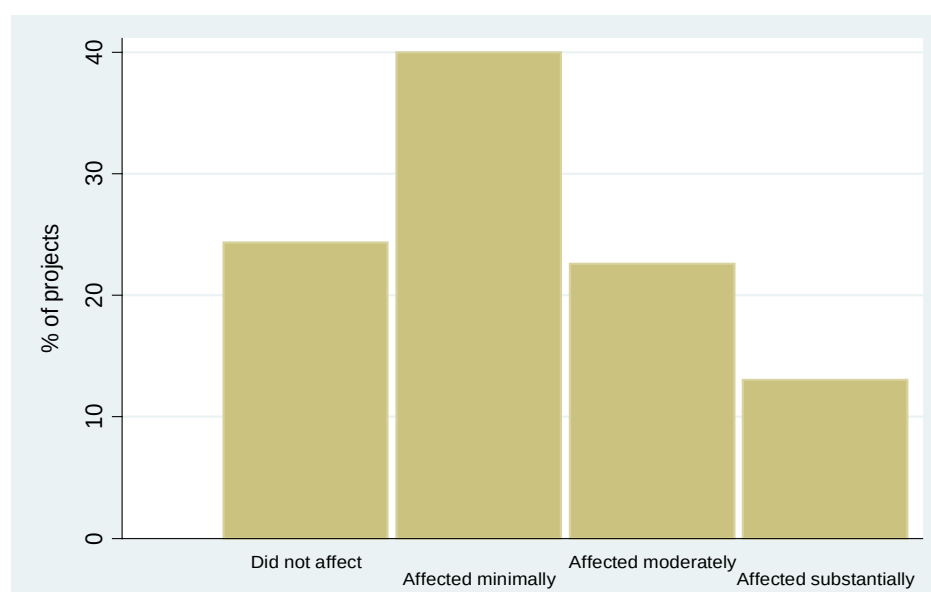
³⁶³ For instance, a number of cases of construction specifications and standards mismanagement by private sub-contractors were revealed by a number of aid agencies engaging with private firms in Afghanistan during the period under review.

lengthy staff absence to disrupt and delay project implementation operations. Rest and recuperation leave is set out by the contracts of the employees working and living in harsh security conditions. It allows an international staff member a week of paid leave after each six weeks worked at the duty station. Combined with accumulated annual leave, it results in two weeks of leave after each six weeks worked.³⁶⁴

While it is originally the practice of the UN agencies and field missions, it is widely assimilated by other international aid agencies and NGOs working in Afghanistan.³⁶⁵

As per our descriptive statistics on this factor (table 8.10), 40 percent of respondents indicated that rest and recuperation leaves have at least minimally affected the successful implementation of the project. A cumulative 35 percent said the negative impact was moderate or substantial.

Table 8.10 – Impact of Rest and Recuperation cycle on Project Success



³⁶⁴ Interview # 90, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

³⁶⁵ Interview # 36, Kabul, 24 October 2009.

Statistical analysis of the impact of the rest and recuperation leaves on project success provides some evidence in support of our hypothesis (Table 8.11). Bivariate linear and ordered probit regression tests generated negative coefficients both at $p < 0.05$ statistical significance level.

Multinomial logit tests indicate that the project in which respondents suggested that the rest and recuperation leaves did affect project success tended to be more likely to be ranked as 'Unsuccessful' by independent evaluations. The multivariate multinomial logit test provides similar evidence, though the pattern is not robust when including other project characteristics.

Figure 8.11

Relationship between Rest and Recuperation and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
13.660	-.248**	0.211**	0.794**	0.362	0.057	0.090

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Rest and Recuperation and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
-0.172	-0.223	1.196**	0.327	0.169	0.257

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

In the course of semi-structured interviews, development practitioners acknowledged the impact rest and recuperations leaves have on project implementation flow in terms

of delays and creating occasional periods of understaffing within the international project team, particularly when the leaves of several staff members coincided.³⁶⁶

‘Such a negative aspect however is outbalanced by the importance of allowing the team members the time outside the duty station to relieve physical, and most importantly, psychological stress associated with living and working in an insecure environment with restricted movement.’^{367 368}

Project managers believed that extensive periods on duty beyond the proscribed rest and recuperation timeframes lead to moral and physical fatigue of staff members, causing low morale, reducing quality of performance, and raising the frequency of interpersonal tensions - all of which was undesirable for successful team work on a project.³⁶⁹

To reduce the impact of rest and recuperation leaves on the smooth project implementation process, managers said it was useful to make arrangements to avoid situations when several staff members would be absent at the time.³⁷⁰ Routine backstopping arrangements when each staff member had an officially assigned backstopping officer able to maintain the work flow on a certain issue under the project was a particularly useful management tool allowing for implementation project continuity.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Interview # 50, Kabul, 31 October 2009.

³⁶⁷ In accordance with the security rules of international aid agencies, international staff members are allowed to move only within a limited number of security cleared areas in the city.

³⁶⁸ Interview # 101, Kabul, 7 December 2009.

³⁶⁹ Interview # 88, Kabul, 3 December 2009.

³⁷⁰ Interview # 19, Kabul, 20 September 2009, Interview # 65, Kabul, 13 November 2009

³⁷¹ Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

8.8 PRT Assistance

Our hypothesis states that the assistance received from the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)³⁷² will have a positive relationship with project success. However, there is little evidence in support of such a hypothesis in the statistical tests conducted (Table 8.12).

Coefficients vary widely, with some taking the opposite of the expected sign. When interpreting this lack of meaningful statistical results, we need to bear in mind the severe lack of variation in the treatment variable in the present hypothesis. As our descriptive statistics show (Figure 6.24), only about 17 percent of the projects in the data set reported having requested assistance from a PRT. 75 percent of the projects that did request PRT assistance said they were ‘very satisfied’ with the quality of assistance rendered by the PRT. Hence, we simply limit ourselves to noting that we find no significant evidence of a negative relationship between PRT support and success: when coefficients take the opposite of the expected sign, they are never significant. Qualitative feedback shows that PRT assistance was requested mainly for technical, transportation, and other logistic purposes. It was particularly relevant in remote or dangerous areas, where implementing certain functions proved harder or more time-consuming without having the logistics and transportation means the PRTs had in their disposal.³⁷³

³⁷² For definition and discussion of the role of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, please see Literature Review chapter, page 15, for a definition and discussion of the role of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

³⁷³ Interview # 93, Kabul, 5 December 2009.

Table 8.12

Relationship between PRT Assistance and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
6.048	0.283	0.234	0.297	-0.603	1.147*	-0.315

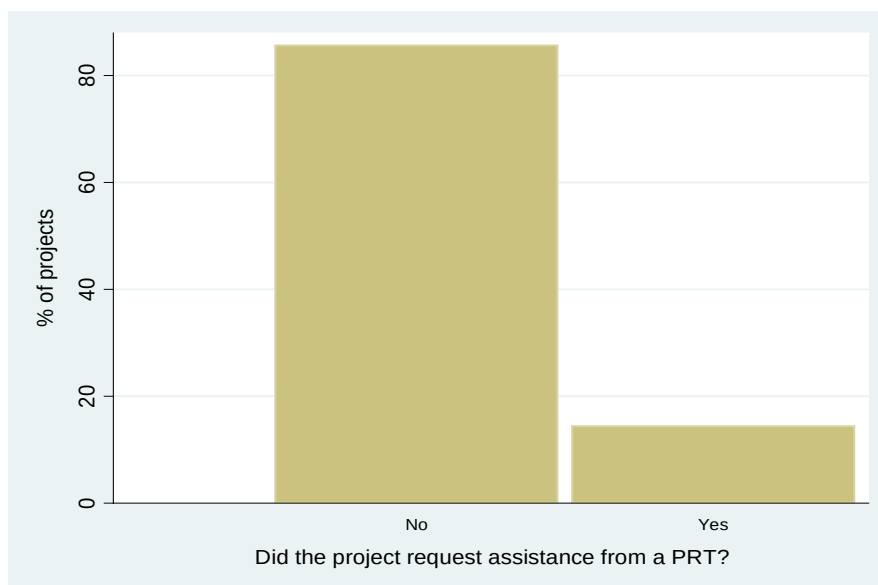
<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between PRT Assistance and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
-0.142	-0.214	0.417	-0.403	1.223	-4.436

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Figure 8.13 – Percent of projects which requested PRT Assistance



Requesting assistance from a PRT is not an established practice, however, and often depends on the initiative and occasionally on personal ties of project managers with certain PRTs. The small number of assistance requests may also be explained by the somewhat unclear status of PRTs as civil-military entities. The development role and

mandate of PRTs in the provinces where they are located is also not clearly defined, and varies considerably depending on the NATO/International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) nation it represents.³⁷⁴ ³⁷⁵ Aid agencies may also hesitate to enlist assistance from PRTs for humanitarian and development aid projects because they are unwilling to be associated in the eyes of local communities with a military structure such as PRTs.³⁷⁶ Some PRTs design and implement their own relief initiatives and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) for the local population as a part of their ‘winning hearts and minds’ strategy. The main goal of such projects is to create a good image and win the approval and support of the local population for a foreign military unit’s presence in their locality, assuming this would contribute to the safety of the military personnel, particularly by means of receiving information and warning on possible Taliban attacks or hideouts. Another assumption behind implementing QIP, which often does not materialize, is that once the local population is relatively befriended and there is space for broader development efforts, this space would be promptly filled by larger, longer-term projects of either the same PRT or other development agencies and NGOs. Whereas some development practitioners consider such projects a point of concern as

³⁷⁴ Interview # 79, Kabul, 1 December 2009.

³⁷⁵ The excerpt from PRTs mission that speaks to the reconstruction and development role of the PRTs reads: ‘Through its Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ISAF supports reconstruction and development (R&D) in Afghanistan, securing areas in which reconstruction work is conducted by other national and international actors. Where appropriate, and in close cooperation and coordination with GIROA and UNAMA representatives on the ground, ISAF also provides practical support for R&D efforts, as well as support for humanitarian assistance efforts conducted by Afghan government organizations, international organizations, and NGOs.’ <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>, accessed 28 January 2011.

³⁷⁶ Interview # 10, Kabul, 17 September 2009.

they blur the distinction between aid and humanitarian agencies and the military operation in the country.³⁷⁷

In general, while the purpose of PRTs in Afghanistan is to extend the authority of the central government into the provinces, approaches in pursuing this task vary widely. Depending on a vast array of civilian and military funding programs, PRTs mostly concentrate in three areas of governance, reconstruction and security. Beyond providing a security presence, PRTs do not conduct combat operations, protect civilians, or provide public order or law enforcement. PRTs do not engaged in counter narcotics operations.³⁷⁸ PRTs have no unified chain of command, and civilian representatives and development workers, while located at the PRT site, report to their superiors in embassies or capitals. Personalities, local environment, domestic politics, capacity and funding of the lead nation all determine PRT priorities and programmes.³⁷⁹

In the pursuit of their improved governance objective, PRTs work with provincial governors, police chiefs and elected provincial councils to increase capacity and improve the provision of services. In reconstruction, PRTs engage in quick impact, village improvement projects to 'win hearts and minds.' In doing so, in theory PRTs are supposed to work with Provincial Development Councils to develop projects and obtain funding. In practice however, it is often the opposite. Development practitioners and national authorities expressed complaints in regard to the PRTs lack of coordination

³⁷⁷ Interview # 15, Kabul, 29 September 2009.

³⁷⁸ Afghanistan Study Group Report 'Revitalizing our efforts, Rethinking our strategies'. Center for the Study of Presidency, January 2008, Washington, DC.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

with provincial leaders. PRT representatives admit that they indeed sometimes went ahead with the selection of a site or choice of a school vs. clinic construction without consulting with provincial authorities. Such actions are mainly explained by two reasons – frustration with local authorities who often do not have enough authority for decision-making (in which case a lengthy process of coordinating with the authorities in Kabul is required), and simple lack of knowledge of Afghan local institutions. Deciding unilaterally on local development projects might have allowed for speedy initiation and completion of projects themselves, but created a sense of neglect and undermining of national institutions at both central and sub-national level, - the very institutions the international aid community is trying to set up and empower.

As for the Quick Impact Projects, as their name suggests, they are thought to be a useful tool for emergency relief and occasional humanitarian aid initiatives, but cannot replace sustainable longer-term development projects. 'PRTs longer-term development projects are rarely effective given short (usually six-month) deployment of staff involved,' and given that the continuation of projects is subject to unit relocations. The PRTs' development efforts are also arguably often guided by the agendas and goals of the military mission in charge, rather than by the needs of the local population. The record of such efforts, let alone the impact, is barely recorded. A recent assessment of U.S. military and development efforts in Afghanistan, conducted at Tufts University (Fishstein and Wilder 2011), states that 'currently it is not even possible to get a complete list of the projects U.S. PRTs have implemented with the approximately 2.64

billion U.S. dollars appropriated between 2004 and 2010, let alone an indication of what the impact has been’.

Some other PRTs are scaling back their short-term development initiatives as a result of negative experiences with earlier efforts. Thus, for instance, the Norwegian PRT in Maimana, capital of Faryab province, undertook to refurbish a local hospital. Numerous deficiencies post-renovation became obvious in the course of the visit of Norway’s deputy ministers of foreign affairs and defense to the hospital in June 2007. The deficiencies reportedly stemmed from the PRT’s lack of understanding of the local context and lack of experience in implementing development projects, but since then Norwegian military is reluctant to engage in development projects. The lack of contact with local authorities and development agencies working locally led to situations when schools and clinics were built without verifying whether there is already a school in the vicinity, or without ensuring that there would be local staff available and willing to work at the school, or whether there would be sufficient material resources to maintain the facility after construction.

The debate over the involvement of the PRTs in post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts is still ongoing, but it seems the evidence speaks mostly against such a role³⁸⁰. There is no coordination mechanism for development aid going through PRTs, as provinces have essentially been divided among the constituent forces in ISAF,

³⁸⁰ Afghanistan Study Group Report ‘Revitalizing our efforts, Rethinking our strategies’. Center for the Study of Presidency, January 2008, Washington, DC.

and the amount of military and development aid received is heavily dependent on the wealth of the contingent in charge.³⁸¹

NATO's ultimate intention is to demilitarize these civil-military structures and hand them over to the UN or, ideally, to the Government of Afghanistan. However, the current reality on the ground dictates that the PRTs' military function be retained until the security situation improves or the government is able to take over from PRTs, using national military and police capacity. In the meantime, given the varying scope and capacity of various PRTs across Afghanistan, efforts are being made to harmonize the reconstruction and development role of the PRTs in various provinces.³⁸²

As was mentioned before, differences among PRTs stem from the variation in the size of military contingents and resources fielded by the countries in charge of PRTs in various provinces. As Jamie Shea, NATO's Director for Policy and Planning, argues, 'it will not be possible to have a 'one-size-fits-all' model for all the PRTs for their reconstruction and development engagements, but the attempt is to adopt a standardized approach to aid initiatives, and define, as far as possible, a certain minimum performance level for each PRT.' This work is ongoing, and is being coordinated through monthly PRT Steering Group meetings at Kabul ISAF HQs. Also, greater attention is now being paid to aligning the reconstruction and development

³⁸¹ Interview # 54, Kabul, 14 November 2009, Interview # 15, Kabul, 29 September 2009.

³⁸² Phone interview with Jamie Shea, Director for Policy and Planning, NATO HQs, Brussels, September 2009.

initiatives undertaken by the PRTs with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and its overarching objectives.³⁸³

In the following section, I will present the findings for the exogenous factors and control variables of economic situation, security conditions, and personal characteristics of respondents.

Exogenous Factors and Control Variables

8.9 Economic Situation (household income)

One of the two exogenous factors included as controls in our model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development was the economic situation at the project implementation location. In order to account for the possible influence of this factor in our model, I posed a hypothesis which states that low income per household in the area of project implementation is negatively correlated with project success.

The measure of economic situation for projects covering several provinces was the mean cumulative household income in the provinces involved (please see Chapter VI on Data Composition and Quality for more detail).

The analysis of the data for the factor of economic situation provides some statistical evidence in support of our hypothesis, though results were not very robust. (Table 8.14). Bivariate multinomial logit regression test indicates at the $p < 0.05$

³⁸³ Ibid.

significance level that projects conducted in provinces with better economic conditions were more likely to become 'Highly successful'. Multivariate linear and ordered probit tests show positive influence of more favorable economic situation on project implementation success, both at $p < 0.05$ significance level.

Qualitative feedback from the semi-structured interviews pointed out that the economic factor was mainly relevant to the implementation of projects which had small local communities as beneficiaries, as opposed to projects aimed at government structures, entities providing social services, etc. Such projects would include for instance community mobilization, women's education and empowerment projects, awareness rising and vocational training programmes. In communities with better-off population, local residents were reportedly more willing to engage and participate in suggested activities, sparing time for training events, project-related gatherings and discussions.

Table 8.14

Relationship between Economic Situation and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
15.3069	0.0002	0.0002	0.0004	-0.00003	-0.00008	0.0009**

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Economic Situation and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.0003**	0.0004**	-0.0001	-0.0008	0.0002	0.001

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

8.10 Security Situation

Our hypothesis states that greater insecurity in the area of project implementation is negatively correlated with project success. I based this hypothesis on the line of reasoning that in more insecure project implementation locations, it would take longer to implement project activities, the level of monitoring and verification by the project management team would be weaker, and the level of support from the local authorities and the national counterpart agency would be less consistent.

While descriptive statistics show that a large group of respondents believed poor security conditions did affect project implementation success moderately or substantially (Table 8.15), our statistical tests failed to detect any statistically significant correlation between the factor of security at the project implementation site and project success. Neither bivariate nor multivariate regression tests showed statistically significant results (Table 8.16).

Table 8.15 – Impact of Security Situation

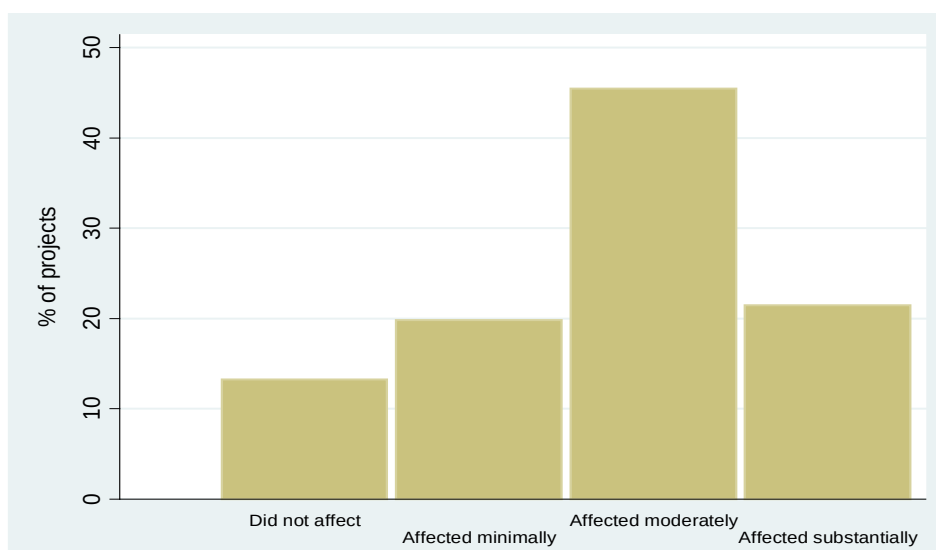


Table 8.16 – Relationship between Security Situation and Project Success (bivariate test)

Chi-square	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
5.156	-0.016	-0.001	0.241	0.179	1.57	0.401

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

Relationship between Security Situation and Project Success (multivariate test)

Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category – Moderately Successful projects)			
		Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
0.141	0.189	-0.024	-0.204	0.077	1.478

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

The absence of statistically significant correlation between security and project implementation success might be explained by the fact that often, when a certain project location became inaccessible due to worsened security conditions for an extended period of time, project funds and activities allocated for that locality would be reassigned to another location through a project revision, thus causing a minimal disruption to overall project outcomes. It is also possible that there is a bias in the initial selection of project implementation locations based on the conditions of security, however no accounts of such bias were mentioned by the respondents in the course of the interviews.

The qualitative feedback that resonated with the pattern in the descriptive statistics, provides accounts of insecurity at the implementation location indeed complicating both logistics and practical aspects of project implementation, but also of

poor security reflecting on the morale of the project implementation team on site.³⁸⁴

Another, more indirect impact of insecurity on project implementation success, is the difficulty of attracting highly-qualified experienced international personnel I discussed earlier in this chapter under adequate personnel considerations.

Project managers who believed that the impact of insecurity on project success was not substantial said that relying on a field office of the implementing international organization or the national government's counterpart made operating in less secure project implementation locations easier, as they it provided an opportunity to rely on more detailed information on the operating environment and have a 'resemblance of a permanent base' on the ground.³⁸⁵

However, the presence of a field office does not insure the implementation process against substantial delays and set-backs. Respondents recalled a number of instances when project implementation teams were forced to revise project objectives due to particularly volatile and unpredictable security conditions at the implementation location, in order to make objectives more feasible to implement within the envisaged time-frame.³⁸⁶

8.11 Respondents Personal Characteristics

I considered whether survey responses may have been influenced by two major respondent characteristics, namely nationality and level of authority. The two

³⁸⁴ Interview # 76, Kabul, 28 November 2009.

³⁸⁵ Interview # 83, Kabul, 29 November 2009, Interview # 105, Kabul, 11 December 2009.

³⁸⁶ Interview # 80, Kabul, 29 November 2009, Interview # 68, Kabul, 23 November 2009.

characteristics were highly correlated: nearly all national respondents are mid-level managers, and most mid-level managers among respondents are national staff members (Table 8.17), which implies that, when we make statements on the views of national respondents, we say something about the views of mid-level managers, and vice versa.

Table 8.17 – Correlation between respondents' characteristics

Was the respondent a national or international staff member?	Was the respondent a low-level or mid-level manager?			Total
	Low-level	Mid-level	High-level	
National	0 0.00	46 93.88	3 6.12	49 100.00
International	19 26.39	11 15.28	42 58.33	72 100.00
Total	19 15.70	57 47.11	45 37.19	124 100.00

Pearson $\chi^2(2) = 72.5403$ Pr = 0.00

Looking at the respondents' evaluation of project factors (independent variables), I found no evidence of bias based on the level of authority within the project team or based on whether the respondents were national and international staff members (Table 8.18). The only exception of the indicators of the national government's support that

tended to be high throughout the pool of responses, but for which I found no proof of social desirability.³⁸⁷

Table 8.18 – Relationship between respondents’ characteristics and responses on project implementation factors (bivariate test)

Variable	N	Linear regression	Ordered probit
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT’S SUPPORT	124	.276***	.587 ***
DONOR COORDINATION	124	.013	-.005
PROJECT LEADERSHIP	124	.056	.014
COMPLEXITY	124	-.058	-.214
COVERAGE	124	-.013	-.027
BUDGET	124		
DURATION	124		
STAFF	124		
MONITORING and EVALUATION	77		
REST and RECUPERATION	124	-.307	-.311

*Complexity, coverage, budget, and duration variables are not measured through 'opinion' responses but are derived from the information in corresponding evaluation reports, and therefore were not tested for their correlation with respondents’ characteristics.

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1

Analyzing the sub-categories of national government’s support, I also found that national staff members shared the views of their international counterparts regarding the national government’s support at the working level, but were more skeptical about high-level political and top-managerial level support (Table 8.19). This might be due to the fact that national staff members, who are also staff members at a mid-managerial level, dealt more with their national counterparts at a working level and less with the

³⁸⁷ Please see discussion earlier in this chapter under the analysis of national government’s support indicator, p.4. Linear regression coefficient of .276 at p <0.01 level.

high-level authorities in the government and are thus of a higher opinion of the colleagues that they worked with on a daily basis and with whom they have developed closer rapport and trust.

Table 8.19

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT BY LEVEL OF OFFICIALS	Ordered probit
HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS	0.641***
TOP MANAGEMENT AT THE NATIONAL PARTNER AGENCY	0.886***
LOWER-LEVEL MANAGEMENT AT NATIONAL PARTNER AGENCIES	0.209
GENERAL STAFF AT THE NATIONAL PARTNER AGENCY	0.036

<0.01 *** <0.05** <0.1*

These were statistical analyses results for the personal characteristics of respondents. In the following section I will give a brief account of general findings presented in Chapters VII and VIII, while the overall conclusions of the study will be presented in the Chapter IX.

8.12 General Conclusions

In Chapter VII and Chapter VIII, I examined in a systematic manner whether the hypotheses we posed with regard to various factors of project success prove true or false. I sought to answer these questions based on original survey data and a reliable measure of project success. For the purpose of this study, the results of empirical tests presented in these two chapters fulfilled four functions.

First, they showed what factors of project success included in our explanatory model of project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development indeed have an influence on project success. Second, the analysis of qualitative data allowed us to

pinpoint possible *interactions* between certain factors in producing a joint effect, which proved highly correlated with project success when tested against quantitative data. Drawing on this particular finding, this study went on to develop a new theory of project success in post-conflict reconstruction and development. The theory suggests that not only is it important to have national government's support and strong project leadership in order to make projects more likely to succeed, but that these reinforce each other. The combination of the two factors allows for achieving the highest rates of project success. Third, supplementary qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews sheds light on *how* various project success factors in the model impact on project success, and on what are some of the possible ways to influence effectiveness in positive or negative ways. Lastly, the variation in responses, together with results on the distribution of control variables on the respondents' personal characteristics, addresses the concern about possible social desirability bias in the data.

CHAPTER IX

Conclusion

There are two major premises that this study takes as a point of departure. The first premise is that aid can have positive impact on societies and people in recipient countries, and it has a potential to prevent conflict relapse in post-conflict situations. The second premise is that aid and development programmes are delivered by means of individual projects, and that it is thus important to examine and improve project implementation practices in order to increase overall efficiency and impact of aid.

The international aid and development literature argues that in order for international aid and development initiatives to be effective, it is of the utmost importance to secure the national governments' support, and coordinate effectively among donors. The question whether these two factors are as important at the micro level of project implementation on the ground as they are at the macro-level of aid policy design represents an interesting puzzle for both development practitioners responsible for the implementation of aid programmes, and for scholars of public policy and management focusing on project effectiveness.

In pursuit of an answer to such a puzzle, this dissertation has examined the role that the national government's support and donor coordination play in the successful implementation of post-conflict reconstruction and development projects on the ground. Additionally, it has assessed what other factors may have influence on project

success. In doing so, it employed the micro-level definition of project effectiveness as a measure of aid project effectiveness.

This study was inspired by observing first-hand how aid initiatives with seemingly similar parameters, features, and design achieved different degrees of success, and by the fact that there were very few sources in the literature, if any, that dealt with this phenomenon and explained project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development in a systematic manner, supported with empirical evidence.

Contrary to previous explorations of similar subjects, in this project I undertook to design a comprehensive explanatory model of project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development. In addition to the factors of the national government's support and donor coordination at the stage of project implementation, the model comprised a range of other possible explanatory factors of project success, bringing together factors that so far were discussed separately in the literature.

The specifications of the model were rooted in two major streams of literature relevant to the issue. On the one hand, the *conventional project implementations* literature that deals with project implementation and management in a regular modern business and policy environment. On the other, the international *reconstruction and development assistance* literature, that deals specifically with the experience of international aid initiatives.

As a result, the model comprised eleven factors of project success derived from both bodies of literature. At the heart of the puzzle were the factors of the national

government's support and of donor coordination, and the role they play in successful project implementation on the ground.

Drawing on innovative field research design, I created an original data set to test the model in a methodical and objective manner. Thus, the information in the data set was based on (1) initial archival research of reconstruction and development projects implemented in Afghanistan during the period of 2002-2008 and consequent participant observation, (2) evaluation reports gathered for the projects included in the analysis, and (3) a questionnaire survey of national and international development practitioners involved in the implementation of the projects included in this study.

9.1 Summary of Argument and Results

Three major findings emerged from the research presented in this dissertation. First, the support received from the national government's authorities and national counterpart teams matters greatly for the effective implementation of projects in posts-conflict reconstruction and development, and makes projects much more likely to succeed in attaining their set objectives. Second, the combination of a high level of support from the national government and strong project leadership on the international project implementation side not only makes projects more prone to success, but allows projects to achieve the highest degrees of accomplishment. Empirical evidence illustrates that the rate of success in projects grows as the degree of the national government's support and the quality of project leadership increases.

Third, donor coordination at the stage of project implementation, in the form it is currently exercised, did not appear to have an influence on project success. The feedback received from development practitioners interviewed suggests that for donor coordination on the ground to be useful and effective, collaboration and coordination agreements and arrangements need to be undertaken ex-ante, i.e at the stage of project design and planning, and need to be clearly reflected in project documents and formal agreements on collaboration.

Complementing the dissertation's quantitative findings, the qualitative accounts of semi-structured interviews, as well as the review of three project implementation cases, revealed that the quality of the national government's support depends on a range of components both internal and external to an individual project. The nature of the national government's support is not static but rather reciprocal, and can be influenced by the international project implementation teams through capacity building interaction and support. Other factors, such as for instance the lack of continuity in the management of the national counterpart agency, overlapping mandates of national specialized ministries and agencies, cultural barriers, cannot be influenced by the international project implementation team, and need to simply be taken into consideration while planning and implementing project activities.

From the semi-structured interviews, we also learn that it is not only the conventional project leadership qualities of technical aptitude and administrative and managerial skills that matter. Qualities such as dedication, a desire to make a difference,

a strong moral compass and judgment, a record of competence and delivery, and the ability to build mutual trust and respect play a crucial role in how successful the international project leader is in building strong working relationship with the national counterpart team, and ultimately making the project a success. These findings add to the traditional definition of strong leadership a component of 'moral' leadership and authority (Doig and Hargrove eds. 1990, Bowles and Renwick 2009, Keohane 2010).

Beyond this, the test of the explanatory model confirmed that factors such as monitoring and evaluation, adequate personnel, and rest and recuperation influence successful project implementation.

Continuous monitoring of progress toward benchmarks, along with quarterly reporting, emerged as the most effective mode of conducting monitoring and evaluation in the course of project implementation. This is because it allowed project managers to respond in short order to emerging obstacles, and react to new opportunities. The general sense of survey respondents was that a system for ongoing monitoring was decisive in successfully and swiftly delivering on a project's objectives. Its absence could lead to outright failure. In addition to responding to offering timely feedback, a strong M&E system can also help keep relations between the project partners functioning. This can be achieved by conducting regular tripartite review meetings. Such reviews allow representatives of the donors, the national partners, and the implementing agency, to coordinate, clear misunderstandings, and air any grievances.

Yet, monitoring and evaluation can become a burden where reporting tasks are rote and do not lead to meaningful feedback or better communication. Project managers can avoid this risk and nurture a useful M&E practice if they are well-versed in the principle and standards of M&E and are prepared to invest time in establishing a process that works.

As is intuitive, well-staffed projects are more likely to succeed in fulfilling their objectives. A common thread in most of the semi-structured interviews was that poor staffing – whether in terms of pure numbers or in terms of skills – could damage team morale, and ran the risk of seriously derailing progress toward project objectives. The basic security risk attached to living in Afghanistan and the often tortuous and slow recruitment processes at aid agencies were identified as main reasons causing such understaffing.

Qualitative and quantitative evidence both suggested that rest and recuperation leaves can have a negative impact on project implementation flow. However, at the same time, regular leave outside the country allows team members to recover from physical, and above all, from the psychological stress associated with living and working in an insecure environment with restricted movement. In the eyes of respondents, this important function outweighed the downsides of rest and recuperation cycles. Indeed, survey respondents reported that experience showed that extended periods on duty beyond the proscribed rest and recuperation timeframes could lead to burn-out of staff members, reducing the quality of performance, raising the frequency of interpersonal

tensions, and ultimately, causing low morale in the team at large. Common-sense measures to mitigate the impact of rest and recuperation cycles on project implementation include arrangements to time travel so that staff members with similar responsibilities are not out of the country at the same time.

9.2 Generalization of Findings

Even if we accept that the factors of the national government's support, project leadership, monitoring and evaluation, adequate personnel, and rest and recuperation matter for project success within the sample set of projects implemented in Afghanistan, it is necessary to consider the issue of external validity of this study's results beyond the sample of projects used for the analysis, and beyond the country of focus – Afghanistan.

To do so, I compared the sample of projects to the universe of projects implemented in Afghanistan (as recorded in the Development Assistance Database) during the period covered in the study based on project sectors, and both sets of projects were found to be very similar.

There were also a number of projects for which a survey questionnaire was sent out but was not received back. In order to verify whether this possible non-response error influenced the objectivity of the data set, I compared two sets of projects – those for which a survey was carried out, and those for which it was not. Based on the distributions of the dependent variable of project success the two sets of projects proved to be very similar. Thus, overall, the results of this study should be fairly generalizeable

to most project implementation experiences in Afghanistan, particularly by larger bilateral and multilateral international development agencies, since the sample of projects for this study was mostly drawn from these types of agencies.

It is harder to assess whether this study's results are generalizeable beyond the experience in Afghanistan and to project implementation in other post-conflict and fragile states. The situation in Afghanistan differs from other post-conflict situations in that despite Afghanistan being regarded as a post-conflict country, the level of ongoing insurgency and military action on the ground separates it from other post-conflict cases, which potentially renders the generalisability of the results of this study limited. While this is true, the impact of the different level of insecurity in Afghanistan on the generalization of the model can be refuted: when included and tested in the model of project effectiveness, both the role of the military (PRT assistance) and the impact of security situation did not show statistically significant impact on project success. I therefore argue that, overall, the model of project effectiveness and the findings it yielded might be generalizeable to project implementation cases within a similar post-conflict environment. In particular, the explanatory model would be applicable to post-conflict situations characterized by a relatively weak national government (comprising specialized ministries and agencies), as well as by low security and socio-economic indicators. Such cases, for instance, could include the experience of international post-conflict assistance to Mozambique, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq.

However, another study would be required to fully test whether the findings of Afghanistan are applicable to project implementation in other post-conflict locations, and to international aid and development as a whole.

The findings might not be immediately applicable to regional programmes covering a number of countries with diverse conditions and several national governments involved. Thus, an analysis of project effectiveness in regional programmes and projects is another avenue for future research.

9.3 Directions for Future Research

Additional research is clearly needed on an issue as important and acute as project effectiveness in post-conflict reconstruction and development. There are several interesting possible directions for research following this study. Future studies might find that the explanatory model of project effectiveness designed in this study can be enhanced by adding new factors that might potentially influence, positively or negatively, the successful implementation of projects in a post-conflict environment. Additional research and analysis is also warranted to fine-tune the operational definition of project complexity factor, and its consequent objective measurement.

Another direction for future research could be to follow up to the main findings of this study, involving the interaction of two independent variables of national government's support and project leadership in successful projects. The results of the study suggested that a combination of the national government's support with strong

project leadership on the international side was conducive to the best project implementation results on the ground. *How* to secure such support from the national government's side, and *how* to ensure strong project leadership on the international project implementation side, could be a worthwhile topic for further research.

The counterintuitive findings of the study on the lack of positive influence of donor coordination efforts undertaken after the initiation of the project, and on the lack of negative effect of insecurity on project implementation success, could provide another avenue for fruitful research. For instance, an empirical inquiry into the role *ex-ante donor coordination* in particular plays in project success, and a qualitative assessment of the *specific conditions* that allow avoiding the negative impact of insecurity on project success could yield interesting results.

This study could serve as a point of departure for such future directions of research, as it is believed to be the first attempt to analyze a number of project effectiveness factors comprised in a model, and to operationalize these factors as independent variables. It is also believed to be the first attempt to systematically test such a model based on a large-n data set that includes projects in various sectors and implemented by various international aid and development agencies, using both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques.

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Annex 1 – Questionnaire Survey Instrument

SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PROJECT STAFF ON RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This is a survey of international and national project coordinators and project staff (and relevant national government officials) regarding their experience with project implementation of a reconstruction and development aid project in a post-conflict setting. The questionnaire includes a series of questions about the project in the implementation of which you were involved. Please limit your answers to only this project.

If you have any doubts or questions regarding this questionnaire, please contact Diloru Kadirova, Oxford University, at + 93 (0) 799 129 291 or at diloru.kadirova@politics.ox.ac.uk

Try to answer these questions to the best of your knowledge. However, if you need to consult someone who is more informed about any of the questions, please do not hesitate to do so. Skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

- 1) What was your position in relation to the project?.....
- 2) Which city or province(s) did the project activity cover?.....
- 3) What *NATIONAL* government partner agency or NGO did you collaborate with in the implementation of this project?

.....

- 4) How supportive and committed has each of the following *NATIONAL* groups or individuals been of your project objectives and initiatives?

	Very supportive	Moderately supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive
a) High-level officials in the Government	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Top management of the national partner agency(es)	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Lower-level management at the national partner agency(es)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Personnel of the national partner agency(es)	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 5) How important was it to coordinate and collaborate with *INTERNATIONAL* aid agencies in the country in order to successfully achieve the objectives of your project? (does not apply to interaction with UNDP, UNOPS, other administrative service partners)

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Not important

- 6) How frequently did you or other project staff members engage in each of the following activities with the staff members of other aid agencies and NGOs in order to coordinate and collaborate with other agencies in the country **FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT?**

	About once a week or more	About once a month	Only a few times a year	Never
a) Official face-to-face meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Casual face-to-face meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Phone conversations	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Written communications	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 7) Was coordinating and collaborating with other agencies in the country important for this projects success in terms of (mark all that apply)

- ☐ Implementation logistics
- ☐ Obtaining expertise lacking in-house
- ☐ Joint funding for an initiative
- ☐ Securing the support of other aid agencies
- ☐ Securing national support
- ☐ Other (please specify).....

- 8) How do you evaluate the impact of your coordination and collaboration with other agencies in the country for the purpose of this project?

- ☐ Substantial impact ☐ Good impact ☐ Modest impact ☐ Poor impact

- 9) Did you use any of the following monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the quality of your project implementation?

- | | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Continuous monitoring | ☐ | ☐ |
| b) Formal bi-monthly self-evaluation | ☐ | ☐ |
| c) Formal quarterly self-evaluation | ☐ | ☐ |
| d) Mid-term evaluation by IEU ¹ | ☐ | ☐ |
| e) Other (please specify)..... | | |

¹ Independent Evaluation Unit of your organization

10) Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

(to be answered by the staff member or manager familiar with project leader's performance)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
a) The project leader possessed adequate technical skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) The project leader possessed adequate administrative skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) The project leader possessed adequate interpersonal skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) The project leader was actively involved in the project team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) The project leader had the ability to motivate team members and maintain a cohesive project team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) The projects leader was not hesitant and was able to enlist the aid of personnel not involved in the project in the event of problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11) Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
a) There was a sufficient number of staff to complete the project	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Project staff possessed adequate technical skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) The project staff possessed adequate administrative skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Project staff understood their role on the project team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12) To what extent you believe the Rest and Recuperation leaves of project staff, including yourself, affected the quality and timely implementation of project objectives?

Affected substantially	Affected moderately	Affected minimally	Did not affect
☐	☐	☐	☐

13) Was any backstopping mechanism introduced to compensate for the R&R cycle absence of staff?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "yes", please describe this mechanism briefly.....

.....

.....

14) Did you request the assistance from a Provincial Reconstruction Team for the purpose of your project implementation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15) If you answered “yes” to previous question, please specify

- What PRT and in what province did you request assistance from?.....
- How often?
- For what purpose exactly?.....

16) If you answered “yes” to question 15, please indicate to what extent you were satisfied with the assistance from the PRT?

☐ Very satisfied ☐ Moderately satisfied ☐ Not satisfied

Please specify

17) To what extent do you believe the security conditions in the area of project implementation affected the success of the project?

Affected substantially Affected moderately Affected minimally Did not affect

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Do you wish to receive a copy of this survey's results once the study is completed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.

Please return the completed questionnaire at diloro.kadirova@politics.ox.ac.uk

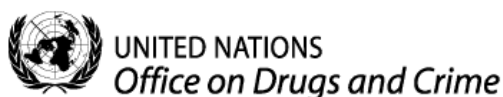
Annex 2 - Questionnaire Survey Coding Manual

#	Question	Categories	Code
1	What was your position in relation to the project?	Open-ended	Seniority: Low-level – 1 Mid-level – 2 High-level – 3 National staff – 0 International – 1
2	Which city or province(s) did the project activity cover?	Open-ended	# of provinces covered
3	What NATIONAL government partner agency did you collaborate with in the implementation of this project?	Open-ended	Ministry / agency
4	How supportive and committed has each of the following NATIONAL groups or individuals been of your project objectives and initiatives?	Very supportive Moderately supportive Not very supportive Not at all supportive	3 2 1 0
5	How important was it to coordinate and collaborate with INTERNATIONAL aid agencies in the country in order to successfully achieve the objectives of your project? (does not apply to interaction with UNDP, UNOPS, other administrative service partners).	Very important Moderately important Not important	2 1 0
6	How frequently did you or other project staff members engage in each of the following activities with the staff members of other aid agencies and NGOs in order to coordinate and collaborate with other agencies in the country for the implementation of this project?	About once a week or more About once a month Only a few times a year Never	3 2 1 0
7	Was coordinating and collaborating with other agencies in the country important for this project's success in terms of: (mark all that apply)	Implementation logistics Obtaining expertise lacking in-house Joint funding for an initiative Securing support of other aid agency Securing national support Other (please specify)	Yes – 1 No – 0
8	How do you evaluate the impact of your coordination and collaboration with other agencies in the country for the purpose of this project?	Substantial impact Good impact Modest impact Poor impact	3 2 1 0

9	Did you use any of the following monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the quality of your project implementation?	Continuous monitoring Formal bi-monthly self-evaluation Formal quarterly self-evaluation Mid-term evaluation by IEU Other (please specify)	Yes – 1 No – 0
10	Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: <i>(to be answered by the staff member or manager familiar with project leader's performance)</i> – <i>pls. see annex 1 – Survey Instrument</i>	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree	4 3 2 1 0
11	Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: – <i>pls. see annex 1 – Survey Instrument</i>	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree	4 3 2 1 0
12	To what extent you believe the Rest and Recuperation leaves of project staff, including yourself, affected the quality and timely implementation of project objectives?	Affected substantially Affected moderately Affected minimally Did not affect	3 2 1 0
13	Was any backstopping mechanism introduced to compensate for the R&R cycle absence of staff?		Yes – 1 No – 0
14	Did you request the assistance from a Provincial Reconstruction Team for the purpose of your project implementation?		Yes – 1 No – 0
15	If you answered "yes" to previous question, please specify: – What PRT and in what province did you request assistance from? – How often? – For what purpose exactly?	Open – ended	
16	If you answered "yes" to question 15, please indicate to what extent you were satisfied with the assistance from the PRT?	Very satisfied Moderately satisfied Not satisfied	2 1 0
17	To what extent do you believe the security conditions in the area of project implementation affected the success of the project?	Affected substantially Affected minimally Affected moderately Did not affect	3 2 1 0
18	Do you wish to receive a copy of this survey's results once the study is completed?		Yes – 1 No – 0

Annex 3 – Qualitative Content Coding Manual

Ranking	% objectives attained	Ranked projects	Key words used in ranked projects
Highly Successful	90% +	(5)	- “very successful project results, in all directions of project activities” - “stable and effective implementation of the project, project has been a success” - “all immediate objectives being achieved, was able to significantly impact the ...” - “objective was over-achieved” - “one of the most efficient projects in the programme” - “achieved its planned outputs, efficient, is a most successful projects in this thematic area in Afghanistan”
Successful	75 – 89 %	(4)	- “a very good rate of objectives attained” - “very good, close to excellent performance on all objectives of the project” - “objectives attained to a large extent” - “outputs are steadily achieved as expected, efficiency is very high” - “the expected outputs were achieved” - “as planned achieved its objectives in time”
Moderately Successful	61 – 74 %	(3)	- “minor shortcomings in achieving a few objectives remained to be addressed” - “planned deliverables achieved, with some delay” - “most of the project objectives completed, in good quality, but with some exceeding costs” - “initial planning and implementation issues did not substantially affect the mostly successful completion” - “all except for a few project activities were completed in time”
Moderately Unsuccessful	50 – 60 %	(2)	- “only some objectives attained” - “for the most part successful” - “over a half of project objectives achieved in time” - “timeliness was not always well monitored, as well as quality of outputs” - “achieved some planned results, suffered delays”
Unsuccessful	49 %-	(1)	- “discouraging in terms of the desired outcomes” - “little durable gain has resulted from the project” - “project has little to show in terms of achievement of objectives” - “key outputs have not been developed and achieved” - “repeated problems, cost overrun” - “less than half of project objectives were attained” - “several important implementation issues overlooked, management problems” - “contextual issues due to shifted focus and priorities” - “success highly questionable”



Annex 4 – Sample UN Evaluation Rating Scale

EVALUATION ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Programme/Project Title:

Programme/ Project Number:

Introduction:

This assessment form must be completed by the evaluator or evaluation team and submitted to the Independent Evaluation Unit. The purpose of the assessment is to provide information for UNODC evaluation database. This information will be used to provide an overview of UNODC's overall performance of programmes and projects.

Ratings:

The evaluators are required to give a rating to each of the items shown below. The ratings are on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). Ratings are based on the following criteria:

Excellent	=	90% +	(5)
Very good	=	75 – 89 %	(4)
Good	=	61 – 74 %	(3)
Fair	=	50 – 60 %	(2)
Unsatisfactory	=	- 49 %	(1)

The ratings must reflect the level of achievement, completion, attainment or impact depending on what is being measured. These ratings are based on the findings of the evaluation and hence are a translation of the evaluation results.

A .	Quality Performance Items	Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Project Design (clarity, logic, coherence)					
2.	Appropriateness of overall strategy					
3.	Achievement of objectives					
4.	Prerequisites fulfilment by Government					
5.	Adherence to Project Duration					
6.	Adherence to Budget					

B.	Implementation	Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
7.	Quality and timeliness of UNODC inputs					
8.	Quality and timeliness of Government inputs					
9.	Quality and timeliness of Third Party inputs					
10.	UNODC HQ Support (administration, management, backstopping)					
11.	UNODC FO Support (administration, management, backstopping)					
12.	Executing Agency Support					

C.	Results	Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
13.	Achievement of results					
14.	Timeliness and quality of results					
15.	Attainment, timeliness and quality of outputs					
16.	Programme/project impact					
17.	Sustainability of results/benefits					

D.	Recommendations	Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
18.	Continue/extend no modifications					
19.	Continue with modifications (minor, extensive)					
20.	Complete Project Revision					
21.	Terminate					

E.	Comments (provide relevant explanations as well as issues of clarification, replicability, best practices etc.)
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Annex 5 – Inter-coder Reliability Table*

Coder A		Coder B	
Project #	Success Ranking	Project #	Success Ranking
1	4	1	3
2	3	2	3
3	4	3	4
4	5	4	5
5	3	5	3
6	1	6	1
7	1	7	2
8	1	8	1
9	3	9	3
10	4	10	3
11	4	11	4
12	1	12	2
13	3	13	3
14	3	14	2
15	4	15	4
16	4	16	4
17	5	17	4
18	3	18	3
19	1	19	2
20	2	20	2
21	4	21	4
22	1	22	1
23	3	23	4
24	4	24	4
25	2	25	3
26	1	26	1
27	4	27	4
28	2	28	2

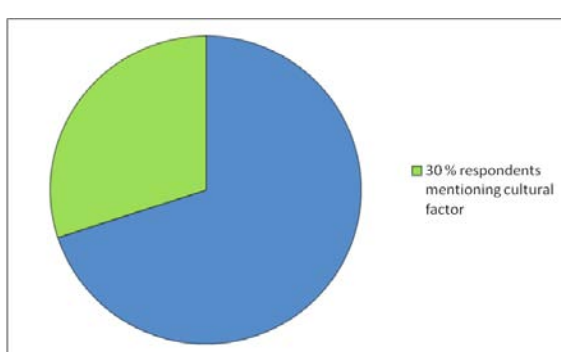
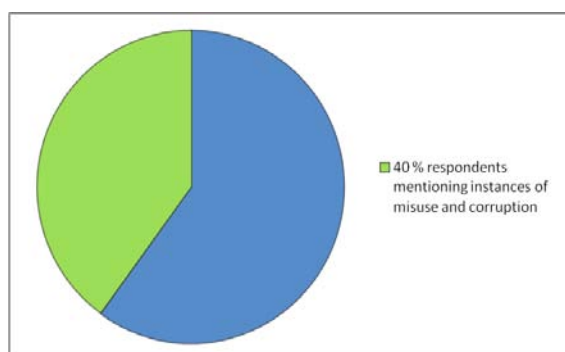
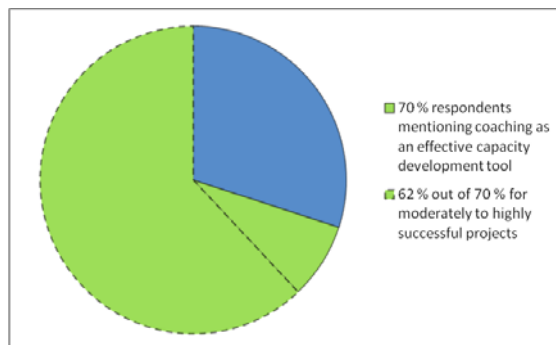
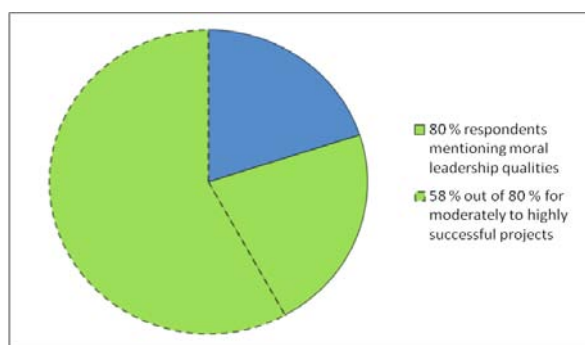
*Project success as ranked by two independent coders

Annex 6 – Statistical tests of multivariate relationship of project success with project implementation factors (variables), without interactions

Variable	Linear regression	Ordered probit	Multinomial Logit (base category - MS)			
			Unsuccessful	Moderately Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly Successful
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT	0.916***	1.145***	-2.615**	-2.270***	0.869	7.855**
DONOR COORDINATION	-0.290	-0.331	1.559	-1.293	-0.799	0.100
PROJECT LEADERSHIP	0.606***	0.802***	-0.701	0.047	2.032	4.119*
MONITORING & EVALUATION	-0.717	0.843	-2.465	-3.297	-0.015	2.096
STAFF	0.187	0.247	-1.321	-0.017	-0.145	0.021
COMPLEXITY	-0.005	-0.007	0.015	-0.0004	-0.002	-0.065
COVERAGE	-0.007	-0.008	0.006	0.042	-0.004	0.041
BUDGET	-3E+53-9	-4E-09	1.2E-08	8.8E-10	-1.24E-08	1.23E-08
DURATION	0.019*	0.025*	-0.015	0.0516	0.038	0.207***
REST & RECUPERATION	-0.156	-0.184	1.203*	0.294	0.200	0.491
ECONOMIC SITUATION	0.0002*	0.0003*	0.0002	-0.0005	0.0001	0.001
SECURITY	0.133	0.177	-0.059	-0.181	0.041	1.310
PRTs ASSISTANCE	-0.134	-0.184	0.962	-0.526	1.181	-5.014

<0.01 *** <0.05 ** <0.1 *

Annex 7 - Semi-structured interviews coding* results



* 87 semi-structured interview accounts and related projects were categorized into two categories – ‘successful’ and ‘unsuccessful’, as opposed to the categorization into 5 groups used for other statistical analyses.

Annex 8 - NSP Facilitating Partners (FPs)³⁸⁸, as of June 2010

NSP has contracted with 29 Facilitating Partners including one UN Agency (UN-Habitat) to work directly with targeted communities to implement NSP activities at the local level. More than 4,000 FP staff support programme implementation. Specific activities undertaken by FPs include:

- Educating communities on NSP policies and procedures;
- Facilitating fair and open elections of Community Development Councils (CDCs);
- Providing technical assistance to help CDCs prepare a Community Development Plan, develop subproject proposals, and promote values of transparency and inclusiveness;
- Providing other assistance during project implementation;
- Training CDC members in management skills;
- Conducting monitoring and reporting.

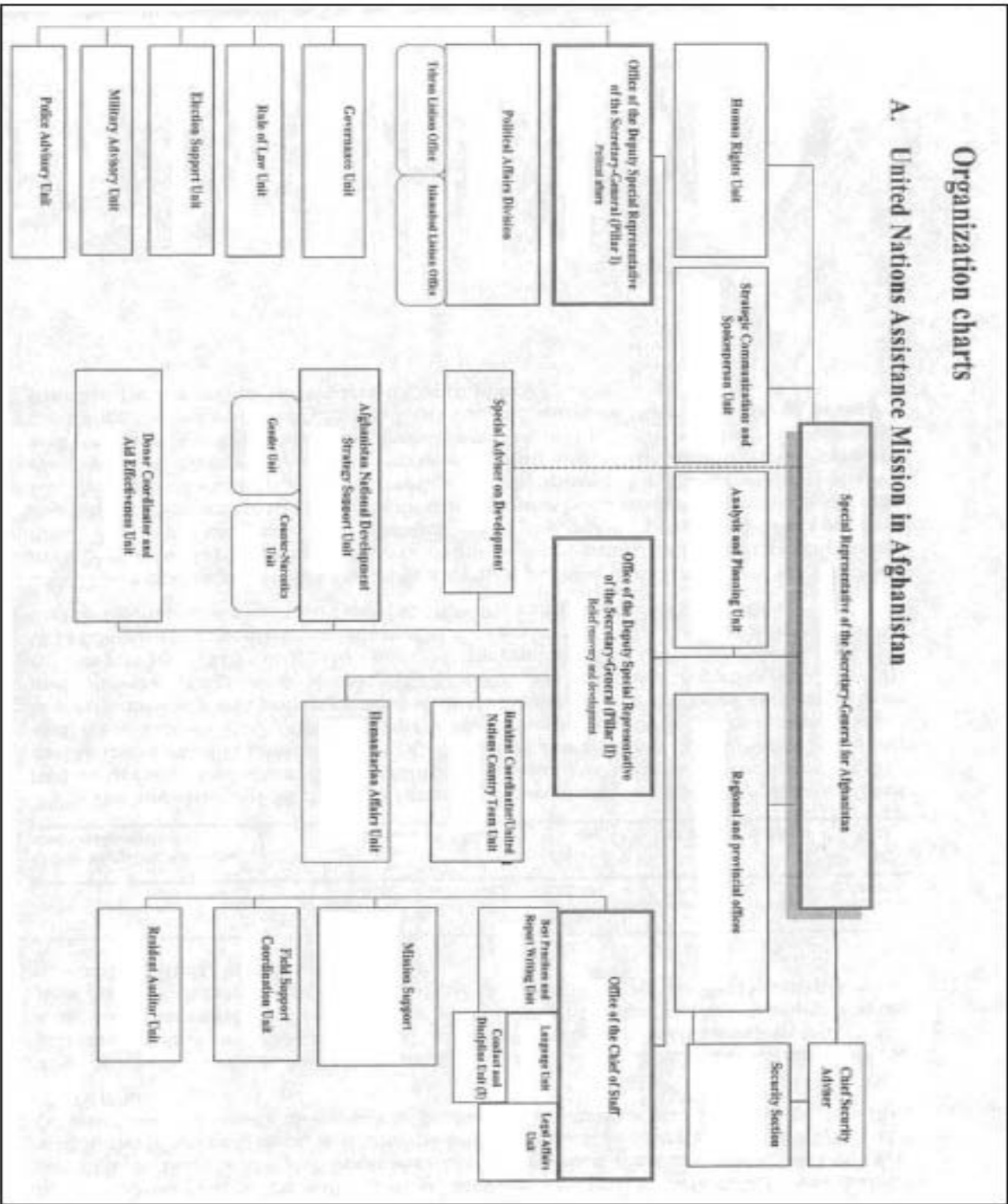
NSP Facilitating Partners:

#	FP Abbreviation	FP (Full Name)	Coverage area (Provinces)
1	ABCD	Afghan Business Capacity Development	Uruzgan
2	ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	Baghlan, Badakhshan, Faryab, Kunduz, Takhar
3	AA	ActionAid	Jawzjan, Kabul
4	AAD	AfghanAid	Badakhshan, Ghor, Nuristan, Samangan
5	AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network	Badakhshan, Baghlan, Bamyan, Parwan, Takhar
6	AREP	Afghan Rehabilitation & Education Programme	Paktia
7	ANCC	Afghan National Re-construction Coordination	Uruzgan
8	BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee	Nangarhar, Hilmand, Paktika, Badghis, Samangan and Takhar
9	CARE	Cooperative for Assistance & Relief Everywhere	Baghlan, Balkh, Ghazni, Paktia, Parwan, Wardak
10	CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance	Balkh, Faryab, Ghor and Heart
11	Concern	Concern Worldwide	Badakhshan, Takhar
12	DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees	Badghis, Faryab, Ghazni, Hirat, Laghman, Paktia and Parwan
13	Flag Int	Flag International	Ghazni, Badakhshan
14	FG	Future Generation	Ghazni, Nangarhar
15	Welthungerhilfe (GAA)	German Agro -Action	Faryab, Jawzjan, Nangahar
16	GRSP	Ghazni Rural Support Programme	Baghlan, Kunduz
17	IRC	International Rescue Committee	Heart, Khost, Logar and Nangarhar
18	IC	Interco Operation	Herat - Chishti Sharif district
19	MADERA	Mission d'aide au Dev.des	Ghor, Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan

³⁸⁸ <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=17>

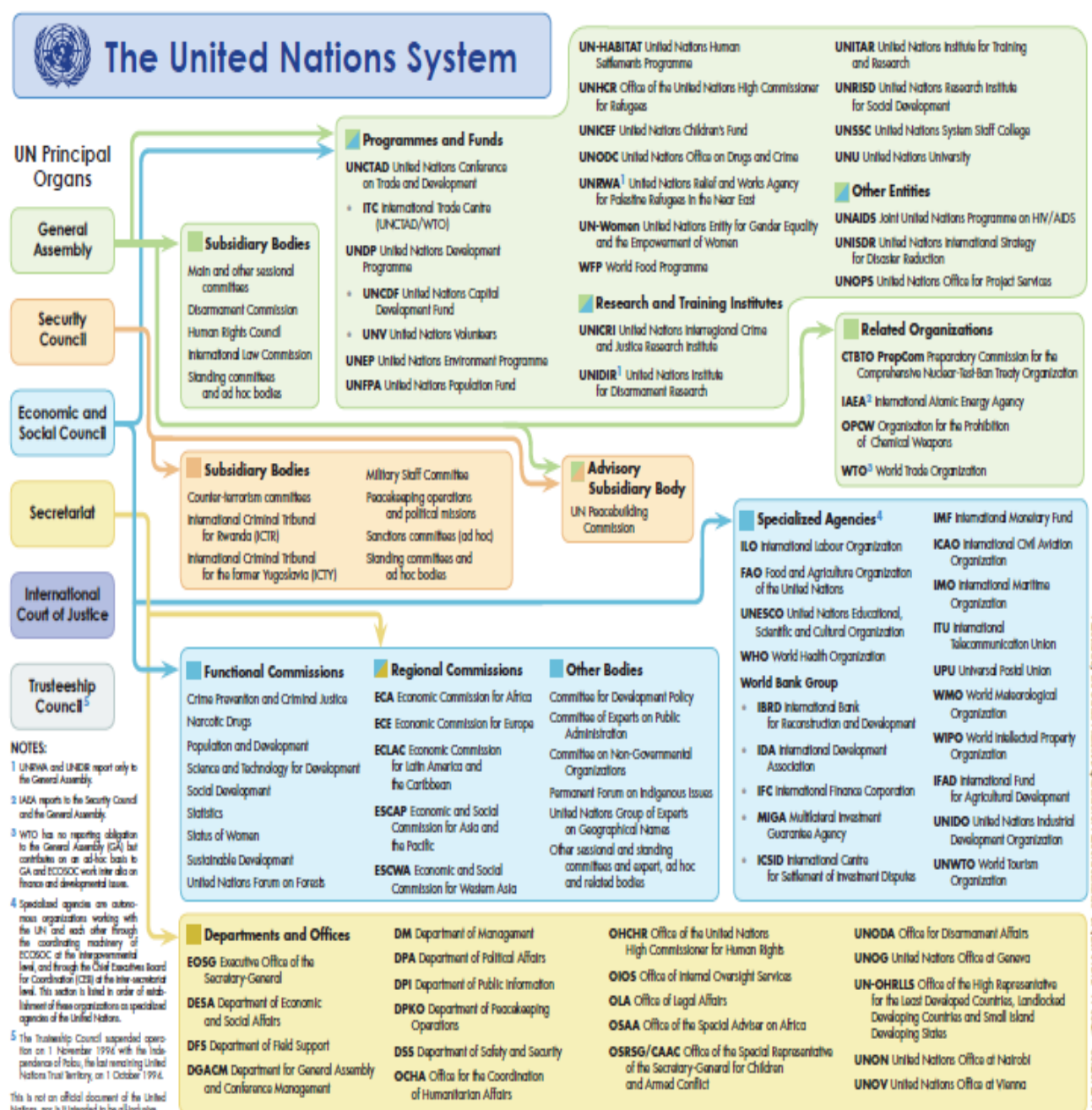
		Economies Rural	
20	NPO/RRAA	Norwegian Project Office /Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan	Badghis, Hirat, Nangarhar and Kunar
21	OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief	Daikundi
22	PIN	People in Need	Baghlan, Balkh, Nangarhar and Paktia
23	PSD	Partners for Social Development	Dai Kundi
24	Relief Int.	Relief International	Kunar and Nimroz
25	SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan	Wardak
26	SDO	Sanayee Development Organization	Kabul
27	Solidarities	Solidarities, Aide Humanitaire d'Urgence	Samangan
28	UN Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme	Balkh, Bamyan, Farah, Hirat, Kandahar, Kapisa, Nangahar, Panjshir, Parwan
29	ZOA	ZOA Refugee Care for Afghanistan	Jawzjan , Saripul

[Annex 9 - UNAMA organizational chart](#)



Source: UNAMA, 2008.

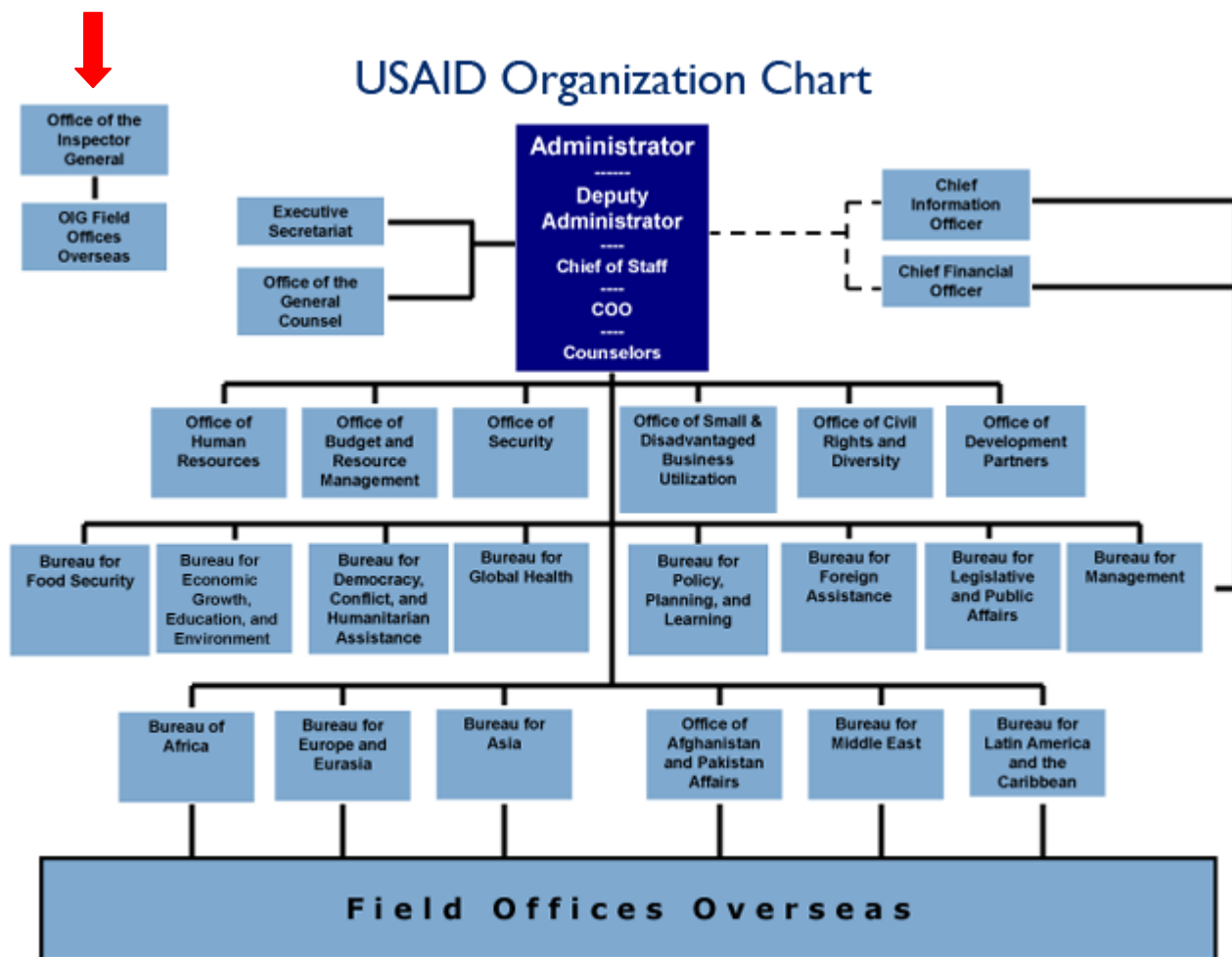
Annex 10 – UN Organizational Chart



**ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE WORLD BANK
EFFECTIVE MAY 5, 2012**

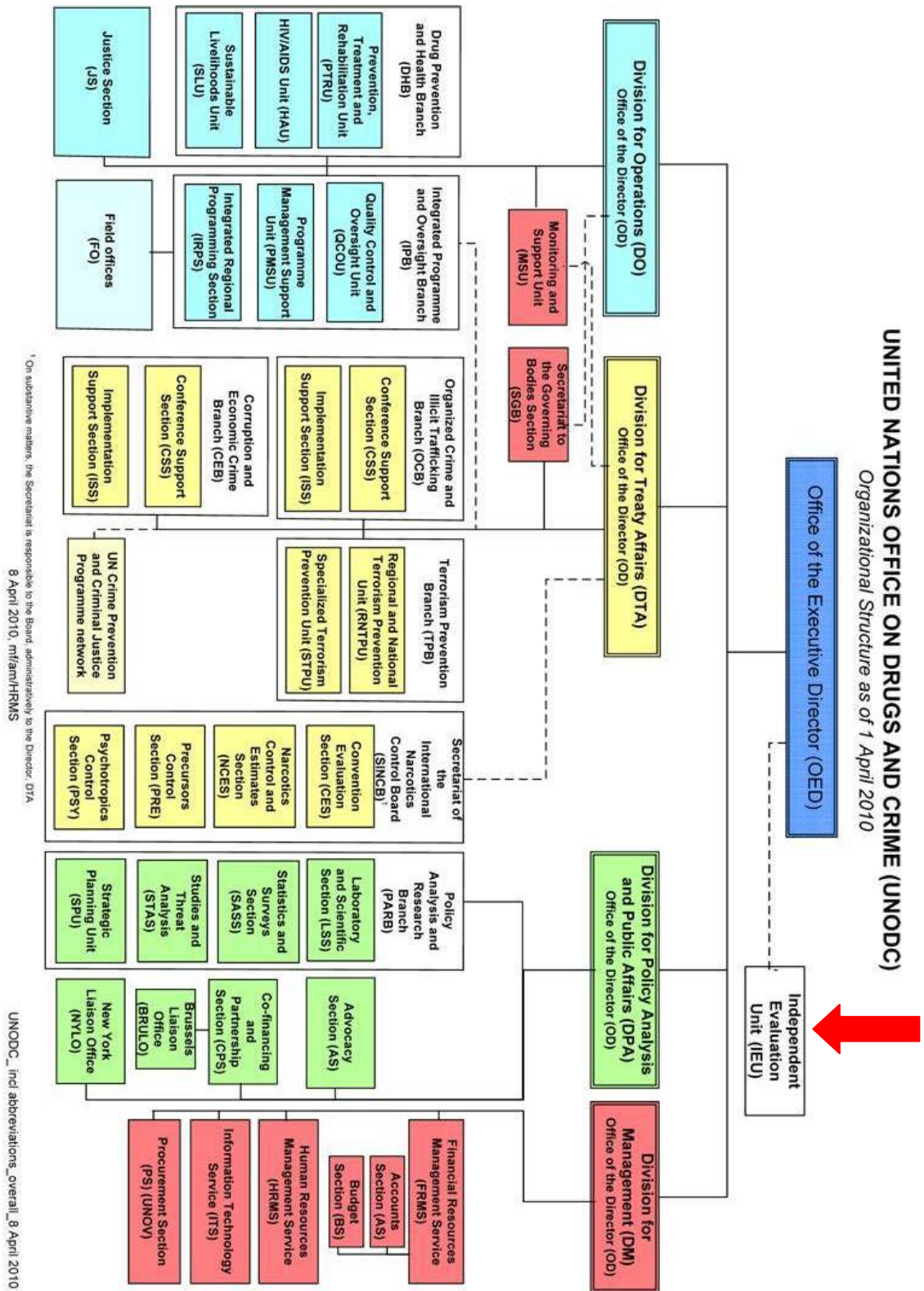


Annex 12 –USAID Organizational Chart



As of 04/29/2011

Annex 13 –UNODC Organizational Chart



Annex 14 - Key historical events in Afghanistan

1838-42 - British forces invade, install King Shah Shujah. He is assassinated in 1842. British and Indian troops are massacred during retreat from Kabul.

1878-80 - Second Anglo-Afghan War. A treaty gives Britain control of Afghan foreign affairs.

1919 - Emir Amanullah Khan declares independence from British influence.

1926-29 - Amanullah tries to introduce social reforms, which however stir civil unrest. He flees.

1933 - Zahir Shah becomes king and Afghanistan remains a monarchy for next four decades, until he was ousted in 1973

1953 - General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. Turns to Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. Introduces social reforms, such as abolition of purdah (practice of secluding women from public view).

1963 - Mohammed Daud forced to resign as prime minister.

1964 - Constitutional monarchy introduced - but leads to political polarisation and power struggles.

1973 - Mohammed Daud seizes power in a coup and declares a republic. Tries to play off USSR against Western powers.

1978 - General Daud is overthrown and killed in a coup. Start of armed revolt.

Soviet intervention

1979 December - Soviet Red Army invades and props up communist government.

1980 - Babrak Karmal installed as ruler, backed by Soviet troops. But anti-regime resistance intensifies with various mujahideen groups fighting Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms.

1985 - Mujahideen come together in Pakistan to form alliance against Soviet forces. Half of Afghan population now estimated to be displaced by war, with many fleeing to neighbouring Iran or Pakistan.

1986 - US begins supplying mujahideen with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Babrak Karmal replaced by Najibullah as head of Soviet-backed regime.

1988 - Afghanistan, USSR, the US and Pakistan sign peace accords and Soviet Union begins pulling out troops.

Red Army quits

1989 - Last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as mujahideen push to overthrow Najibullah.

1992 - Najibullah's government toppled, but a devastating civil war follows.

1996 - Taliban seize control of Kabul and introduce hard-line version of Islam, banning women from work, and introducing Islamic punishments, which include stoning to death and amputations.

1997 - Taliban recognised as legitimate rulers by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They now control about two-thirds of country.

1998 - US launches missile strikes at suspected bases of militant Osama bin Laden, accused of bombing US embassies in Africa.

1999 - UN imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial.

2001 September - Ahmad Shah Masood, leader of the main opposition to the Taliban - the Northern Alliance - is assassinated.

US-led invasion

2001 October - US-led bombing of Afghanistan begins following the September 11 attacks on the United States. Anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces enter Kabul shortly afterwards.

2001 December - Afghan groups agree deal in Bonn, Germany for interim government.

Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of an interim power-sharing government.

2002 January - Deployment of first contingent of foreign peacekeepers - the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - marking the start of a protracted fight against the Taliban.

2002 April - Former king Zahir Shah returns, but makes no claim to the throne and dies in 2007.

2002 June - Loya Jirga, or grand council, elects Hamid Karzai as interim head of state. Karzai picks members of his administration which is to serve until 2004.

2003 August - Nato takes control of security in Kabul, its first-ever operational commitment outside Europe.

New constitution

2004 January - Loya Jirga adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency.

2004 October-November - Presidential elections. Hamid Karzai is declared winner.

2005 September - Afghans vote in first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years.

2005 December - Parliament opens with warlords and strongmen in most of the seats.

2006 October - Nato assumes responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan, taking command in the east from a US-led coalition force.

2007 August - Opium production has soared to a record high, the UN reports.

2008 June - President Karzai warns that Afghanistan will send troops into Pakistan to fight militants if Islamabad fails to take action against them.

2008 July - Suicide bomb attack on Indian embassy in Kabul kills more than 50.

2008 September - US President George Bush sends an extra 4,500 US troops to Afghanistan, in a move he described as a "quiet surge".

2009 January - US Defence Secretary Robert Gates tells Congress that Afghanistan is new US administration's "greatest test".

2009 February - Nato countries pledge to increase military and other commitments in Afghanistan after US announces dispatch of 17,000 extra troops.

New US approach

2009 March - US President Barack Obama unveils new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan to combat an increasingly "perilous situation". An extra 4,000 US personnel will train and bolster the Afghan army and police, and there will also be support for civilian development.

2009 August - Presidential and provincial elections are marred by widespread Taliban attacks, patchy turnout and claims of serious fraud.

2009 October - Karzai declared winner of August presidential election, after second-placed opponent Abdullah Abdullah pulls out before the second round.

2009 December - US President Barack Obama decides to boost US troop numbers in Afghanistan by 30,000, bringing total to 100,000. He says US will begin withdrawing its forces by 2011.

An Al-Qaeda double agent kills seven CIA agents in a suicide attack on a US base in Khost.

2010 February - Nato-led forces launch major offensive, Operation Moshtarak, in bid to secure government control of southern Helmand province.

2010 July - Whistleblowing website Wikileaks publishes thousands of classified US military documents relating to Afghanistan.

General David Petraeus takes command of US, ISAF forces.

2010 August - Dutch troops quit.

Karzai says private security firms - accused of operating with impunity - must cease operations. He subsequently waters down the decree.

2010 September - Parliamentary polls marred by Taliban violence, widespread fraud and a long delay in announcing results.

2010 November - NATO - at summit in Lisbon - agrees plan to hand control of security to Afghan forces by end of 2014.

2011 January - President Karzai makes first official state visit to Russia by an Afghan leader since the end of the Soviet invasion in 1989.

2011 February - Number of civilians killed since the 2001 invasion hit record levels in 2010, Afghanistan Rights Monitor reports.

2011 April - Burning of Koran by a US pastor prompts country-wide protests in which foreign UN workers and several Afghans are killed.

Some 500 mostly Taliban prisoners break out of prison in Kandahar.

2011 July - President's half-brother and Kandahar governor Ahmad Wali Karzai is killed in Taliban campaign against prominent figures.

2011 September - Ex-president Burhanuddin Rabbani - a go-between in talks with the Taliban - is assassinated.

2011 October - As relations with Pakistan worsen after a series of attacks, Afghanistan and India sign a strategic partnership to expand co-operation in security and development.

2011 November - President Karzai wins the endorsement of tribal elders to negotiate a 10-year military partnership with the US at a loya jirga traditional assembly. The proposed pact will see US troops remain after 2014, when foreign troops are due to leave the country.

2011 December - At least 58 people are killed in twin attacks at a Shia shrine in Kabul and a Shia mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Pakistan and the Taleban boycott the scheduled Bonn Conference on Afghanistan. Pakistan refuses to attend after a Nato air strike killed Pakistani soldiers on the Afghan border.

2012 January - Taliban agree to open office in Dubai as a move towards peace talks with the United States and the Afghan government.

Source: BBC Afghanistan Country Profile

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12024253>