



STRENGTHENING DEVELOPMENT- PARTICIPATION – GOVERNANCE LINKAGES: DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM IN AFGHANISTAN

Duration: One Year

Budget: US\$175,350

Source of Fund: Government of Afghanistan and CIRDAP

1.0 Introduction

Since 1990s, the importance of democratic, participatory and good governance system is being increasingly emphasized as the major development paradigm in the developing countries. It is now widely recognized that economic growth alone is not enough to promote human progress. An emerging consensus is that other factors e.g., democratic governance, strong local government system, eradication of poverty, gender equality and social development are of critical importance for ensuring sustainable human development and these issues should be targeted consciously and comprehensively as components of the broad based national development strategies.

Over the past few decades, almost every country in the South Asia region has established a framework for decentralized planning, although the nature of their programmes differs quite considerably. Decentralized planning in these countries has been perceived as having many advantages from the top-down format which preceded it. It has been increasingly recognized that problems of rural development/local area development differ considerably across space and therefore cannot be solved by the typical broad-sweep programmes instituted in the early decades of the development effort. The specific problems in the respective area need to be analyzed and the resources available in each particular context identified before development programmes can be formulated. These resources include the human resources of the local population and the participation of the people from start of the process. Bringing government, development administration and expertise, closer to the people can only serve to improve the dialogue necessary to enlist those resources.

But, while these crucial advantages of decentralized planning for rural development /local area development appear to be acceptable in theory, it is not so clear that they can be realized in practice. The institution of a decentralized planning framework goes against many of the traditions of development and administration in Asia. It requires the establishment of a new

cadre of planners, with multi-dimensional skills, new set up of institutions, and commitment of the central government and so on. It is unlikely that such changes can be affected overnight.

Within the process of development, the role of local government system is thus considered as central both as an instrument as well as a means to shape the future society. A strong and effective local government system is treated as a necessary precondition of a democratic society. The promotion of participatory development and good governance requires the strengthening of the strategic role of the local government in harnessing development-participation-governance linkages and advocating the needed reforms in the sociopolitical and economic systems through policy dialogue and capacity building.

1.1 The Case of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is comprised of a variety of ethnic groups, the overwhelming majority of whom are Muslims, usually either followers of Sunni or Shia Islam. The extreme linguistic and ethnic diversity in Afghanistan is the result of millennia of human migrations, political upheavals, invasions, and conquests. The resultant scattering of small diverse groups is not only a major cause of the difficulty in finding sufficient common ground to promote peace and understanding between people, but also makes accurate characterization of the borders between them commonly rather arbitrary.

A 2003 estimate put the population size to 28,717,213, but the effects of war—with its casualties and refugees—makes any estimate highly speculative. In 2001 some 78 percent of the population lived in rural areas. Of the urban dwellers, probably about half lived in Kabul, the capital city. The nomadic population was estimated to be about 2.5 million people.

Although the Afghan population is composed of many distinct ethnic groups, certain elements of their way of life are much the same. Characteristically, the family is the mainstay of Afghan society. Extremely close bonds exist within the family, which consists of the members of several generations. The family is headed by the oldest man, or patriarch, whose word is law for the whole family. Family honor, pride, and respect toward other members are highly prized qualities. Among both villagers and nomads the family lives together and forms a self-sufficient group. In the villages each family generally occupies either one mud-brick house or a walled compound containing mud-brick or stonewalled houses. The same pattern prevails among the nomads, except that tents replace the houses.

Settlements in Afghanistan with less than 100 houses number over 10,000 and those with 100 to 250 houses number about 1,000. There are 53 urban centers that range in size from 2,500 to 25,000 people. In the smaller villages there are no schools, no

stores, nor any representative of the government. Each village has three sources of authority within it: the *malik* (village headman), the *mirab* (master of the water distribution), and the *mullah* (teacher of Islamic laws). Commonly a *khan* (large landowner) controls the whole village by assuming the role of both malik and mirab.

A variety of social ills are common in Afghanistan, such as poverty, inter ethnic strife, inequality of men and women, and widespread thievery, kidnapping, and banditry. Blood feuds handed down through generations are legendary, and revenge is regarded as a necessary redress of wrongs. The civil war strengthened these tendencies to the point where little travel was safe in the country without an adequate supply of money to buy safe passage. The civil war killed, wounded, and displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians. Water, telephone, and sewage systems were destroyed. Years of war have separated and impoverished extended families that traditionally cared for widows and fatherless children. Now many are left to fend for themselves. Some provinces began experiencing famine in the 1990s, and diseases of malnutrition began to be reported for the first time in decades. Traditional Afghan custom, which was revived by the Taliban and other fundamentalist rebel groups, imposes limits on women's activities outside the home. In 1996, after the Taliban came to power, the United Nations reported a series of 21 new ordinances governing the behavior of women in Afghanistan. Women were prohibited from working outside the home, attending school, using perfume, participating in sports, and walking outside the home without the escort of a male relative. Women were reportedly stoned to death for infractions, a practice that had been suppressed for decades.

2.0 Administrative Structure of Afghanistan

The context of Afghanistan has changed with the end of the Taliban regime from managing the interim government to the development and institutionalization of a democratic government structures with the approval of the new constitution in 2004 by the loya Girga. The Constitution has reiterated the states obligation in creating a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, protection of human dignity and rights, realization of democracy, ensuring national unity and equality among all ethnic groups and tribes and providing balanced development in all areas of the country (Article¹ 6). Accordingly it has laid down the foundation of the fundamental government structures at national, provincial and district levels.

2.1 National Level

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will be a unitary state (Article 1) headed by the President directly elected by the people through free, general and secret voting

¹ Articles quoted from the unofficial English translation of the draft Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan available at www.af

(Article 60-61). There will be a bicameral National Assembly consisting of Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders)(Article 82). The members of the Wolesi Jirga, the number of which shall range between 220-250 and are proportionately represented from the region, are directly elected through free, general and secret voting. Special measures are taken to provide just representation for all people of the country. At least one female member will be elected from each province (Article 83). For Meshrano Jirga, one member from each provincial council, one member from among the district council members of a province are elected while one-third of the members are appointed by the president from among the experts and experienced personalities of which 50% must be women (Article 84). The main functions of the National Assembly are (a) ratification, modification, or abrogation of laws and/or legislative decrees (b) approval of plans for economic, social, cultural, and technological development (c) approval of state budget, permission for obtaining and granting loans (d) creation and modification of administrative units (e) ratification of international treaties and agreement, or abrogation of the membership of Afghanistan to them and (f) other authorities specified in the constitution (Article 90).

There is also a Loya Jirga which is the highest manifestation of the people of Afghanistan. The Loya Jirga consists of Members of the National Assembly and the Chairpersons of the provincial and district councils. The Ministers, Chief Justice and members of the Supreme Court can also participate in the sessions without the right to vote. The Loya Jirga is convened (a) to take decision on the issues related to independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity and supreme interest of the country; (b) to amend the constitution and (c) to prosecute the President on crime against humanity, national treason or crime, accused by two third majority of the Wolesi Jirga (Article 110-111).

2.2 Local level

i. Province

There is a provincial council at the provincial level in which members are elected, in proportion to the population, by free, direct and secret ballot by the resident of the province. The council elects one of its members as the chairman. The provincial council takes part in securing the developmental targets of the state and in improving its affairs in a way stated by the law and advises on important issues falling within the domain of the province. The councils perform their duties in cooperation with the provincial administration (Article 138-139).

ii. District and Village level

In order to actively mobilize local communities in local level activities and to provide them with increased opportunities for their direct involvement in the local administration, councils are set up in districts and village level in accordance of law. Members of these councils are elected by the local people through free, secret and direct elections. The participation of nomads in these councils will also be regulated by law (Article 139-140).

iii. Municipalities

A Municipal council is set up in order to administer a city affair. The Mayor and members of the Municipal Council are elected by free, general, secret and direct elections (Article 141).

Public Administration System

The public administrative system of Afghanistan is based on central and local administrative units. The central administration is divided into a number of administrative units headed by a minister. The local administrative unit is a province. The number, area, parts and structures of the provinces and the related administrations are based on population, social, economic and geographic conditions. The government, while preserving the centralism, delegates certain authorities to local administration units for the purpose of expediting and promoting economic, social and cultural affairs, and increasing the participation of people in the development of the nation (Article 136 - 137).

What is needed now is to strengthen the institutional frameworks that will help Afghan government to initiate a pilot action research in one province for developing a broad based , gender sensitive and representative local governance mechanism. It is expected that the pilot project will provide sufficient feed back to the authority for the development/strengthen its local government structure, local administration structure, local level planned development process, management information system, rebuilding infrastructure and generating income and employment opportunities.

3. Issues in strengthening participation and governance for sustainable development in Afghanistan

Since a new Constitution has already been adopted in Afghanistan, it is now required to develop a suitable and manageable institutional framework at the provincial/district level in consistent with fundamental provision of the Constitution. It is expected that the proposed project will be able to provide necessary guidelines for developing a broad based, gender sensitive and representative local governance mechanism.

The above requires effective analysis of the functions of local community in promoting participation by stakeholders for poverty reduction in an era of market liberalization and globalization e.g., as mediator; as countervailing power to establish the accountability of the local government institutions; as vehicle for participation of the local community in development efforts; as promoter of social mobilization, plurality, social cohesion and equality; and as creator of social capacity at the grassroots level. Indeed, if social mobilization is to succeed at the local level, local governance institution should be a critical ingredient in any democratic decentralization initiative to facilitate popular participation in local governance and promote democratic norms and practices. Such a organization, however, is largely

absent in Afghanistan. The promotion of an effective local level organization requires attention to specific local contexts. It is widely recognized that, unlike infrastructure or human capital, the support for local organization must rely, instead of blueprint approaches, on local conditions and indigenous initiatives. This requires a broader perspective within which specific approaches applicable to internal characteristics at the local level can be adopted.

In the above context, a better understanding of the role and traditions of local community can provide useful practical insights into how to accelerate the participatory development and ensure good governance in the selected province of Afghanistan and simultaneously contribute to democratic processes and social development. A comprehensive review will contribute to improved understanding of the relevance of local government institution for democratic governance and pro-poor development at the local level and of the best practices that require be promoting and replicating. The proposed study aims to contribute to this important field.

A strengthened/newly established local government institution is likely to contribute to a more effective approach to rural development and poverty reduction in Afghanistan. Within the poverty reduction programmes, two distinct roles of the local government institutions are emphasized. First, an effective local level institution ensures a sense of ownership by the stakeholders; and second, a well-functioning institute expands the capacity of the local community to identify the development needs and to put in place innovative and effective strategies and approaches. Moreover, strengthened local level institutions can acquire the necessary strengths to put pressure on the government to effectively serve the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged groups. Increased interaction at the local level helps to establish accountability, transparency and a plurality of organizations and interests necessary to building a democratic social fabric that is representative of the wide spectrum of the population.

3.1 Objectives and Concerns of the project

The aim of the project is to promote the role of local government institution through enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency in advancing economic and social development as well as in stimulating democratic change and stability. The specific objectives of the project include the following:

- Explore the pros and coins of establishing an effective local governance system within the perspective of a more cooperative relationship and of mutual recognition of the complementarity of the role of local government institutions and other stakeholders operating at the local levels and at other levels stretching up to the highest level of the administrative tier;

- Examine the efficacy of a local government institution in attaining a proper balance between the state and market interventions in promoting rural development and poverty reduction;
- Analyse the implications and suggest effective mechanisms, drawing from appropriate case studies, of the support to local government institution as a way of promoting democratic norms and practices and socioeconomic development; and
- Distil lessons from the experiences, identify priorities and sequencing, and provide guidance to help design more effective strategies to promote broad based, gender sensitive and representative local governance mechanism in Afghanistan.

3.2 The Research Questions

Within the above concerns, several research questions will be addressed in the project:

◆ **How can effective local governance institutions be established, strengthened and sustained?**

Relationships between the proposed institute and the local community e.g., practices followed by the institute in working with local community for promoting participatory development and empowerment of the local community; difficulties in relationships between the institute and local community and whether the institute undermine community people activities e.g., through imposing own agenda, remaining insensitive to political and power struggles within the community; failure to develop abilities and skills of the community, reluctance in showing accountability to the communities that they seek to help; and identify the systematic problems of the community in performing the desired tasks of empowering the poor and make them self-reliant;

• **Do the current practices and methods effectively facilitate the promotion of participation, empowerment and local community?**

The currently pursued strategies of supporting local community require a better understanding to target the assistance more precisely e.g. what roles the local community play in poverty reduction and how these can be enhanced in terms of effectiveness and scale; how the institute contribute to development of local community and how relative efficacy of alternative institutional forms differ to realize participation; what implications emerge for the community as a result of administrative decentralization and how does decentralization change their constraints/opportunities; what specific measures are necessary to strengthen the autonomy and power of local community.

• **How can the strategic role of local governance institute be strengthened?**

Local level institutions are required to create effective local demand for reforms in sociopolitical and economic systems to strengthen development-participation-governance linkages for which policy dialogue and capacity building at the community level is essential. This requires formulation of innovative strategies to improve the enabling environment, to ensure gender equality in local level institutions; identify and support local initiatives for participatory development and share information on innovative initiatives; and provide channels for the local people to participate in decision making that affects their lives.

The development of a vibrant and dynamic local level institutions requires the analysis of the relevant issues, as indicated in the present proposal, to suggest creative and concrete programmes to improve relations between the government and local governance institutions, to ensure capacity building of these institutions through effective utilisation of the advantages of information and communication technologies and the power of networking.

3.3 Focus of the Study

In order to achieve the broad objectives and find answers to the research questions posed the study will focus the following issues while analyzing the structure of local government institutions in Afghanistan.

- Composition of local self-governments
- Functioning of local self governments
- Planning and coordination
- Financial management
- Strengthening local administration
- Infrastructure development
- Community level work through social mobilization
- Development of rural technology and technical manpower
- Monitoring and review mechanism
- Communication and dissemination

These are some of the areas of interventions identified for strengthening local level governance in Afghanistan which will be more sharpened as the project evolves. Broadly, these areas can be categorized into three groups:

- Capacity building works: Activities implemented by the local governments themselves for the enhancement of their regulatory capacity.
- Coordinating works: Activities implemented by INGO/NGOs, in which local governments provide coordinating support, which will enhance the synergetic effect of the activities as well as social responsiveness of local governments.
- Facilitating works: Activities implemented by sectoral agencies and private sectors in which local governments provide necessary facilitation support to involve project beneficiaries and make local environment conducive.

4.0 Proposed methodology of the Study

A detailed project design, outlining the methodology of the study and specific issues to be covered including indicators to be employed to analyse the relevant issues, will be prepared before conducting the study. Relevant information will be collected from the secondary sources, case studies and primary information through employing suitable participatory techniques. A steering committee will be formed consisting heads of selected CIRDAP Link Institutions (CLIs) to provide guidelines and supervise the activities of the project team. The project reports will be published along with lessons learned, policy recommendations and follow-up actions and disseminated widely in appropriate forms for the benefit of the policy makers, experts, researchers and the international community.

5.0 Time Schedule

The study period will be twelve months. The tentative work schedule is given below:

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Duration in months</i>
Preparation of Project Design / Work Plan/Planning Workshop	1
Formation of Steering Committee	1
Conducting Country Study	6
Preparation of Report	2
National Workshop	0.5
Publication of Final Report / Policy Briefs	1.5
Total	12

6.0 Budget

Items	Amount US\$
1. Expert Inputs	
a) Team Leader/Institutional and Governance expert (US\$3,000x12mmx1)	36,000
b) Financial Expert (US\$4,000x2mmx1)	8,000
c) Training and Capacity Building Expert (US\$4,000x2mmx1)	8,000
d) Participatory and decentralized development Expert (US\$4,000x2mmx1)	8,000

2. Management and Coordination	
2.1 Steering Committee Meetings (\$8,000x3)	24,000
2.2 Resource Persons	10,000
2.3 Project administration (equip. supplies and communication)	3,000
2.4 Coordination travel (local + International) and subsistence	40,000
3. Support Services	
3.1 Administrative Staff Support	8,000
3.2 Researchers Planning Workshop	5,000
3.3 Materials and equipment	2,000
3.4 Final Workshop	10,000
4. Others	
4.1 Report preparation and dissemination	5,000
4.2 Contingency (5%)	8,350
Total	175,350

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