Overview of NGO Assistance to the People of Afghanistan
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The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) consists of 58 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. ACBAR was created in August 1988, as a response to the signing of the Geneva Accords in April 1988, and was formed, with the strong support of the Afghan humanitarian aid community, to address the urgent need for a coordinated approach in delivering assistance to Afghanistan. ACBAR provides a framework for NGOs to coordinate the planning and implementation of aid programs for the Afghans. ACBAR also provides the opportunity for NGOs, the UN and bilateral agencies to exchange information, share expertise and acquired knowledge about Afghanistan. The framework for coordination, that ACBAR provides, encompasses approximately US $ 100 million of Afghan humanitarian aid programs implemented by ACBAR's 58 member organizations.
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SUMMARY

This Overview of NGO Assistance to the People of Afghanistan provides information that demonstrates the favorable circumstances, feasibility and reasons for the need for continued stable funding of humanitarian assistance programs inside Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees.

"Five Provincial Profiles" offers a brief introduction to each of five selected provinces: its character prior to the war; the effects of the war, and, levels of and trends in NGO assistance within the given province. The preface to this section, "Data Collection and Methodology," explains the process by which the data were collected and the potential for reliability in light of their being representational of ACBAR's 58 member organizations only, as opposed to being inclusive of all humanitarian assistance currently being delivered to the Afghans.

The section on the "Refugee Situation" presents an overview of the current status of the refugee population in Pakistan, prospects for repatriation and the impact of funding cutbacks - both real and potential - on this population. "Emergency Food Shortage" traces the roots of the present food crisis in northern Afghanistan and gives data on projected shortfalls of wheat production, in support of the appeal for an emergency response. Finally, the closing chapter of the Overview, "NGOs as Implementors" draws clear parallels between the nature of humanitarian assistance within the challenging and ever-changing environment of Afghanistan, and the special capabilities of NGOs to implement projects within that environment.

CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The Geneva Accords and the consequent withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan resulted in many unfulfilled expectations. Instead of a final victory there was ongoing regional fighting and instead of a massive repatriation came an influx of new refugees. The anticipation by many donors that it would be possible to implement conventional, large-scale aid programs in Afghanistan proved wrong.
Inspite of these developments there are today compared to one and a half years ago, several key favorable changes in the environment of implementing rehabilitation programs in rural Afghanistan. These differences are a largely pacified rural countryside, an increased ease in movement, and the possibility of transporting large quantities of commodities into Afghanistan.

The reduction of widespread conflict to localized clashes is the most significant factor increasing the feasibility of implementing rehabilitation programs. The large scale attacks on resistance-controlled areas, which were frequent during the height of the war, have now ceased.

Today it is possible to reach regions in a much shorter period of time as compared to the time of the Soviet occupation. For example, while it took a field worker 8 to 9 days to reach the province of Wardak before the Soviet troop withdrawal, it now only takes 1 to 2 days. The same applies for transport of commodities.

Even though the above-mentioned factors are advantageously changing the horizons of delivering aid to the Afghans, there are several unchanged realities, which will continue to dictate the nature of delivering humanitarian aid. Firstly, the fragmentation of political power and the lack of a central authority significantly limits the possibility to carry out conventional large-scale aid operations. A second restricting reality is the widespread and serious devastation of Afghanistan’s infrastructure, which severely restricts the handling of large amounts of relief goods. Another factor continuing to thwart the delivery of aid, is the shortage of Afghan human resources to meet the much-needed build up of administrative and project implementation capacity.

These limitations, however, are outweighed by the favorable changes that now make the implementation of projects in Afghanistan more feasible; the restrictions do not exclude the possibility of continuing and even increasing the current level of support for rural rehabilitation.

ON GOING REFUGEE SITUATION

The one unchanged fact about the current Afghanistan refugee situation is that it remains the largest concentration of refugees in the world. In spite of this, concern and interest about the ongoing plight of the Afghan refugees has declined in recent years.

This loss of interest is most noticeable in the form of reduction in donor funding of Afghan refugee programs. As an example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) budget for Afghan refugee programs has declined 23% from US $ 43 million in 1988 to US $ 33 million in 1990. Furthermore, donor countries today have already decreased the level of commodity rations, such as wheat, sugar, skimmed milk and tea, available to refugees in Pakistan. This is placing a continuing burden on the Government of Pakistan, which is required to contribute wheat to balance the annual wheat shortfall for refugees.
In light of the unchanged refugee situation, these cuts are ill timed. The approximately 5 million Afghan refugees deserve the continued assistance and support of donor countries. Funding of rehabilitation programs inside Afghanistan should not be at the expense of continued support for refugee assistance.

**TRENDS IN NGO ASSISTANCE**

The key reality about the role of NGOs in Afghanistan is that they have, since the beginning of the conflict, been the primary implementors of humanitarian aid projects in Afghanistan. The most important trend in NGO assistance is that there has been a notable increase in the level of assistance during the last several years. The following chart illustrates this trend in the combined budgets of ACBAR's 58 member organizations.

![Chart showing trends in NGO assistance](chart)

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As the table above shows there has been a sharp increase in cross-border aid, from US $30 million in 1988 to US $66 million in 1989. This expansion did, however, come at the expense of a sharp shifting of funds away from Pakistan programs, as evidenced by the drop in Pakistan project disbursements from US $37 million in 1988 to US $23 million in 1989.
In general NGOs have since 1988 reduced their emergency relief efforts, such as cash for food programs. These programs have been replaced with agriculture and infrastructure rehabilitation work, including irrigation repair and fertilizer and seed input projects. There has also been a significant increase in projects in the health and education sectors. These trends are illustrated in the following graph, which shows the aggregate expenditures in five sectors by ACBAR member organizations for the provinces of Baghlan, Herat, Kandahar, Logar and Paktia.

**ACBAR NGO EXPENDITURES BY SECTOR FOR FIVE PROVINCES**

The rationale for continued humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, both as refugees and in Afghanistan, is several fold. The fact that the war is ongoing should not be an argument against continued aid but rather one in favor of the need for ongoing assistance. This is indeed the case provided the purpose of aid is to reduce human suffering.

The overriding goal of implementing rehabilitation projects in rural Afghanistan is to create the environment conducive to repatriation. It is widely accepted by the Afghan humanitarian aid community that an improvement of socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan will have a strong positive influence on drawing refugees back into Afghanistan.
The current lack of significant repatriation must not be used as a reason to reduce the level of rehabilitation work now being implemented in Afghanistan. While reconstruction work commences, the plight of the five million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran must not be forgotten. Reducing assistance to refugees as an incentive for them to return to Afghanistan is in contradiction to the internationally accepted principle of voluntary repatriation.

An additional benefit of continuing current rural assistance is that it is establishing and building the networks and infrastructure in preparation for a large refugee return, which most certainly will occur when a political settlement is reached. Furthermore, the projects now being implemented in Afghanistan are making it possible for Afghans to stay in their homeland and not become refugees in Iran or Pakistan.

In short, continued aid to Afghans, both for the refugees and in Afghanistan, is not only necessary but also feasible. It is up to the international donor community to stand up and take their responsibility not to abandon the Afghan people in their moment of need.
DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Traditionally Afghans have always resisted any type of census. This does not imply that there are no statistics available on pre-war Afghanistan. The last though not completed census dates from 1979. The information can not be characterized as totally reliable.

The census mentioned services as the only existing data collection on pre-war Afghanistan. All data that have been collected since the Soviet occupation refer to the census of 1979, however, with the restriction that the results are open for interpretation and misunderstandings.

For instance, it is not clear how many Afghans lived in the country in 1979. The 1979 census implicates a population of 14 million. Part of the census of 1979 that is considered accurate is the data referring to agriculture.

UN agencies, like the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Program (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) base their assumptions on the (refugee) population on the 1979 census. So do most of the non-governmental organizations.

DATA COLLECTION DURING THE WAR

All data produced in the context of this publication should be viewed in this regard. In addition to that "very Afghan fact", one should realize that collecting information under war circumstances is harsh. In fact the accuracy of data has improved since Soviet withdrawal in February 1989. Still most of the data have not been monitored so far.

At present the only reliable information existing on present day Afghanistan is produced by the Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan, which used enumerators to collect information on agriculture in all 29 provinces of Afghanistan. UNHCR has created a similar database regarding refugees and refugee origin, meant to be a tool for reconstruction. Many UN agencies have their own data collections now, which are by and large based on NGO information.

At present UNIDATA, the data collection project of UNOCA, is starting a survey in five selected provinces.

REFERENCES

For the purpose of this publication ACBAR has collected all available information from its membership and double checked those data with existing other information sources, like the Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan, UNHCR and WHO databases, and studies and surveys conducted by different organizations and academics.

Given the lack of accuracy of many data, including those that have served as a reference, the information presented in this publication should be viewed as trends in humanitarian assistance to refugees and rural Afghanistan. ACBAR members have provided to their best knowledge, most of these data.

Populations-related, graphic presentation of data are based on UNHCR statistics and a population survey conducted by prof. Marek Sliwinski of the University of Geneva in 1988. These are generally regarded as the most reliable population data available.

Information on agriculture, rural rehabilitation and food shortages in the north west is based on the consistent database of the Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan. UNHCR and WFP databases, as well as information from the Government of Pakistan and the government of the North West Frontier Province served as resources for data on the current refugee situation.

ACBAR SURVEY ON FIVE PROVINCES

All data presented in the section on NGO implementation and the five provincial profiles are derived from a survey ACBAR conducted among its membership, in January-February, 1990. NGOs have used their own administrative systems to produce the information, but their methodology of recording project results differs. Reference data, as mentioned above, were used to check these data. Though the data are not accurate to the last decimals, the information produced through the ACBAR survey presents a reliable trend in development of relief operations.

ACBAR has collected relevant budget figures from its membership. Only 10 percent of the 58 members were in a position to submit the budget figures within the given timeframe. The budget figures until 1989 include donor relations, and budgets for refugee and cross border programs. Given the difference between earmarked funding and actual receipts some 20 percent of the membership could not give accurate figures on their 1990 budget situation.

ACBAR and its partner organization in Quetta, SWABAC have created a data base on projects implemented by its membership. This database contains indications by NGO, by sector and location. Since ACBAR and SWABAC are in the process of redefining this projects database to the extent that it can be a reliable tool to coordinate project implementation and to prevent project duplication, ACBAR conducted a separate survey on the five selected provinces presented in this information package.
Five Provincial Profiles

- BAGHLAN
- HERAT
- LOGAR
- PAKTIA
- KANDAHAR
Baghlan is part of the northern agricultural belt, situated north of the Hindu Kush mountains. Prior to the war, Baghlan had considerable agricultural potential, growing a wide variety of food and cash crops, like wheat, rice, cotton, barley, maize and sugar-beet. Baghlan’s industrial base was also quite strong, with sugar, cotton, cement and textile factories in operation.

RESULTS OF THE WAR

The capital of the province, Pul-i-Khumri, is on the strategic Salang Highway, leading to the Soviet Union. During the war, the province suffered a great deal of fighting and war damage, causing 21 percent of the population to emigrate to Pakistan. In addition, unknown numbers of Baghlanis sought shelter in the mountains to the east, where the well-known commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud, has his power base.

During the years of the Soviet occupation, the fertile plains of Baghlan were difficult to reach, due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the province and the poor condition of the area’s roads. Like most of Afghanistan’s rural area’s, the accessibility has improved slightly in the past year, but the province continues to be of strategic importance to the Kabul government, creating insecurity among its people.

NGO ASSISTANCE

According to the Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan, self-supporting farming continued to a reasonable extent in the province until 1985. Since 1986, however, NGOs have begun to implement programs to boost declining crop production due to the continuing effects of the war and lack of maintenance of irrigation systems. In 1989, the amount spent by NGOs on such agricultural rehabilitation programs as irrigation repair and cash for the purchase of seed and fertilizer swelled to over $100,000 from just over $20,000 in 1987. Cash for food programs have been on the decrease, declining from $70,000 in 1987 to $20,000 in 1989.

Trends in assistance

In general, NGOs are replacing their emergency relief efforts, such as cash for food and cash for work programs, with rural rehabilitation and development projects, such as irrigation repair and cash for the purchase of seed and fertilizer.

NGOs have stepped up these activities in 1989 and will continue to do so in 1990. At present, several irrigation improvement projects are underway, as are programs to improve seed inputs and veterinarian assistance.

However, all assistance to Baghlan has been affected by harsh political conditions in the area and, after the
Soviet withdrawal in February, 1989, by the continuing conflict between resistance forces and government troops. NGOs are still concerned for the security of their field-workers in Baghlan.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Since 1987, health facilities have been established under the central guidance of the Northern Supervisory Council led by Ahmed Shah Massoud, which has overseen such activities as the training of basic health workers and hospital personnel and the establishment of hospitals as well as clinics. In 1989, the first immunization program for women and children was started.

From 1987 to 1989, NGOs almost doubled their medical assistance to Baghlan, serving 33,000 patients in 1987 and 62,000 in 1989.

At present, there are 42 primary schools with some 8,200 students and 200 teachers in the province. These numbers reflect a dramatic increase from 1987, when there were half the number of schools, one-quarter the number of students, and only 6 trained teachers.

CONCLUSION

Due to its location, Baghlan has had limited NGO inputs. However, the needs of the rural population must be met. Projects undertaken in the province will undergo a slow transition from cash for food programs to rural rehabilitation programs during the course of the next few years.
HERAT

Herat is situated in northwestern Afghanistan, strategically bordering the Soviet Union and Iran. Despite the historically and culturally important city of Herat at its center, the province has always been primarily undeveloped. Rainfed farming has dominated the agriculture of the province, producing modest wheat, barley, cotton and rice crops. Along with sheep farming, there is also a small silk industry.

Herat City through the ages has been a crossing point on the routes that linked the West with the East, a geographical position that has brought the city such notable visitors as Marco Polo and has resulted in the destruction of the city by conquerors like Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Timor Lane.

RESULTS OF THE WAR

In the years of the Soviet occupation, Herat once again met destruction. Not only was 40 percent of the city destroyed, but the whole province suffered severely from war activities. At least 600 out of the 1,300 villages were destroyed. Vast areas of the province, especially near the important road to Kabul, were completely depopulated by Soviet-Afghan army attacks. In order to remove coverage for resistance fighters and to secure safety for convoys, buildings and complete villages in the vicinity of the crossroads were torn down and 60 percent of the trees in the surrounding area of Herat City were cut down.

Bombing of rural areas and the destructive measures to prevent camouflage resulted in a refugee emigration to Iran of at least 35 percent of the estimated pre-war population of the province, amounting to 5.05 percent of the total refugee population in Iran and Pakistan. Most of the refugees sought shelter in Iran, but an unknown number of people left the province and went to the mountainous neighboring provinces. Many farm families had no choice but to migrate to the provincial capital.

NGO ASSISTANCE

Both UN and NGO surveys conducted in Herat over the past several years conclude that there has been a total collapse of the province's infrastructure, calling for immediate assistance. For example, the Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan shows that 50 percent of all irrigation systems in the province are destroyed. Since more than half of the province's agriculture is based on rainfed cultivation, the damage to the karezes has reduced local food production to drastically low levels.

Until 1988, Commander Ismail Khan was the main authority in rural Herat, running vast areas of the province under the aegis of his own civil administration. NGOs working in the area had to work in collaboration with Ismail Khan, but since the Soviet withdrawal in
February, 1989, the influence of the local militia, paid off by the Kabul government, has been growing. The conflicts between the forces of Ismail Khan and the militia have created an explosive and politically insecure environment for NGOs and the population.

Trends in assistance

The UN has named Herat one of its twelve "target provinces" and has established a Salam Mobile Unit in Zindajan, in the vicinity of Herat City, for delivery of food and medical supplies. The UN policy for Herat is to provide food for work programs to the rural population, to address the food shortages in that province, as well as in Badghis, the province to the northwest.

Responding to the need for emergency programs, NGOs began limited cash for food programs in Herat in 1986 and expanded them to $500,000 by 1988. Since 1988, NGOs have spent $350,000 on agricultural inputs, but emergency relief continues to be the pressing need in Herat.

In 1989, FAO, in cooperation with NGOs, started programs to replace deteriorated wheat crops by improved wheat seed distribution. This activity has reached only a small fraction, approximately 0.4 percent, of the total wheat growing areas. Since Herat has suffered a large decline in cultivation, these replacement programs need to be increased.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Although NGOs have increased their health programs in the province, the overall health situation is critical. Malnutrition and diseases stemming from polluted water are common in the province as well as TB, cholera, typhoid, malaria and leprosy. The UN recognizes that Herat has an overall lack of medical facilities and reports that there is only one doctor for each 50,000 inhabitants and only 106 para-medical staff. Only a small number of outpatients were reached in the past three years: 35,000 in 1987, 30,000 in 1988 and 43,000 in 1989.

Education has been as badly hit as rural infrastructure, with at least 60 percent of the pre-war primary schools destroyed. The existing 88 primary schools are functioning ineffectively due to the lack of teachers and schoolbooks.

CONCLUSION

As long as agriculture in Herat is not rehabilitated, refugees will not be inclined to return. Cash for food programs ought to be continued at the same time that agricultural rehabilitation programs continue to be developed.
KANDAHAR

Kandahar is the second largest province of Afghanistan, situated in the southeast and bordering Pakistan. Prior to the war, Kandahar had a well-developed agricultural system, with 85% of the tillable land under irrigation. Double cropping was made possible by the low altitude and relatively mild climate. The main crops were wheat, maize and barley, largely harvested with mechanized equipment.

Kandahar was one of Afghanistan’s important fruit-growing areas, with large orchards in the center of the province. Kandahar’s once-vigorous dried and canned fruit industry has now greatly declined.

Kandahar is still easily accessible by road from Baluchistan province in Pakistan. Most of the roads in the province need repair, however, due to chronic neglect. The province is the main gateway for southern and western Afghanistan.

RESULTS OF THE WAR

Kandahar suffered the most severe effects of the war of any province. At least two-thirds of Kandahar City, once the capital of Afghanistan, is destroyed and all villages in a radius of 30 kilometers of the city are totally razed. In this once-populous part of the province, many villages were bombed, completely destroying all public buildings, schools, hospitals, houses and vital irrigation systems. Large parts of the province are totally abandoned, but in some areas, far from the main roads, life continues relatively normally.

The extensive fruit orchards along the road from Kandahar City to Herat have been clearcut by Soviet forces to prevent resistance camouflage. This and other war activities of the Soviet army severely reduced one of the province’s economic mainstays.

Kandahar has been largely depopulated by the war. The 250-mile border with Pakistan was crossed by 89 percent of the pre-war population. The refugees from Kandahar account for 12.3 percent of the total refugee population in Pakistan and Iran. The only refugee return worth mentioning at present is concentrated in Kandahar province. NGOs working in Baluchistan and Kandahar estimate that at least 50,000 refugees returned on a voluntary basis since the fall of 1988, though it is still not known whether these returns are permanent or only seasonal.

NGO ASSISTANCE

Kandahar has been a target province for many NGOs, both those based in Peshawar and in Quetta, since the beginning of cross-border assistance. During the war, Kandahar established a fairly stable political balance, since many local commanders and their councils were able to overcome traditional tribal differences. This political structure still serves as a reliable channel for NGO assistance. NGOs have felt comfortable enough to have field monitors working in the province, even during wartime.
The good conditions in Kandahar resulted in an early start of rural rehabilitation programs, without detracting from the immediate relief needs of the population of the province. The rehabilitation programs have been matched by cash for food programs, while the reconstruction activities concentrated partly on cash for work projects and partly on importation of commodities, like oxen, tractors, wheat seed and fertilizer.

In 1986, the first agricultural pilot projects were conducted, generally two years earlier than elsewhere in Afghanistan. Their basic objective was to create incentives for remaining families in the depopulated province to stay home, and to discourage them from seeking refuge in Pakistan.

Since 1987, these programs have been expanded to include repair of irrigation systems, wheat replacement programs, veterinarian assistance and training of farmers in plant protection and wheat multiplication. In 1988, for example, over $200,000 was spent on agricultural improvements. In 1989, that figure rose to just under $500,000. A UN Salam Mission to the province has endorsed the continuation and expansion of these projects.

Trends in assistance

Though wheat prices are high, Kandahar does not suffer urgent food shortages. The province is best served with the continuation of agricultural reconstruction programs, as planned by the NGOs working there. For example, karez repair remains an important project, since 75 percent of the irrigation systems in Kandahar are not working, due primarily to lack of maintenance. Cash for work assistance enables local farmers to repair their irrigation systems themselves.

Like elsewhere in Afghanistan, NGOs are tending to replace cash for work and cash for food programs with more structural rural development projects such as increasing the inputs of improved wheat seeds and training farmers to use better yielding varieties and to distribute them to other farmers.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

NGOs have provided limited health facilities to the remaining population. The population suffers from typical diseases such as diarrhea, TB and malaria. Epidemic controls and immunization programs for mothers and children are still needed.

Educational assistance by NGOs has been limited since the population was so dramatically reduced. Only a few schools still function, because most of them had been destroyed in the early years of the war and most teachers left the province for work elsewhere. NGOs are undertaking teacher training programs now to pave the way for an expanded educational system in the future. When significant numbers of refugees begin to return to the province, NGOs will increase their efforts in education further.

CONCLUSION

Since Kandahar is the only province in which spontaneous refugee return is reported, NGOs must continue their rural assistance. The devastation has been so intense, it will take continued efforts to restore the province's agriculture and fruit industry.
Logar is part of the central east zone. The province is a transit area. Agriculture concentrates in narrow valleys in the mountainous province, where the cool climate and long winters limit the growing season. The most common crop grown in the valleys is irrigated wheat, but in the uplands, where limited cultivation takes place, rainfed wheat, maize and potatoes are grown.

Prior to the war, Logar was famous for its fruit orchards, and the province's well-developed sheep flocks provided wool for a small textile industry.

RESULTS OF THE WAR

During the war, the Soviet-Afghan army concentrated its activities along the main roads in Logar. As in many strategically located provinces, wide swathes of land along the major road were clearcut to eliminate protective cover for the resistance.

Heavy bombing in the valleys, where the resistance maintained operational bases, resulted in further devastation. At least 50 percent of Logar's vital irrigation systems were destroyed. Livestock, essential for farmers as a buffer for disappointing harvests, were diminished by bombing and shooting.

As a result of the war, the rural economy collapsed and the tactics used to raze large areas along the roads resulted in a serious depopulation of the province. Most people went to Pakistan, but there was also migration to the capital of the province, Pul-i-Alam, and Ghazni province. At present, refugees from Logar account for 7.45 percent of the refugee population in Pakistan and Iran.

NGO ASSISTANCE

NGOs started their relief programs at an early stage in the war. Food deliveries, cash for food programs and health care were targeted at the remaining inhabitants. However, in 1985, the first agricultural inputs arrived in Logar and have increased ever since.

In Logar, the political situation, as in many places in Afghanistan, follows ethnic and tribal loyalties, resulting in local power bases often ruled by a commander in conjunction with a council. To NGOs, these local authorities were the only possible channel for humanitarian assistance.

The lack of a central council, the depopulation, and the absence of any administrative structure made assistance by NGOs in Logar difficult. Nevertheless, NGOs have been increasing their rural development programs.

Trends in assistance

At present, the main programs run in Logar aim at improving the devastated agriculture. Some NGOs are
implementing programs based on communal rehabilitation, including education and health, but the bulk of the assistance is irrigation repair, veterinarian assistance, and inputs of improved wheat seed and agricultural extension.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Despite the continuing conflict between government and resistance forces, health facilities in the province have been largely spared from destruction. These facilities are proving adequate at serving the present diminished population, but will need to be improved once substantial repopulation takes place.

At present, 21 schools are operational, providing primary education to some 4,500 children.

CONCLUSION

Logar is still a war zone. The present level of programs is serving the remaining population in Logar's many valleys. However, once refugees return in large numbers, additional programs to reconstruct bridges and roads will need to be undertaken to supplement the current programs.
PAKTIÁ

Paktia, bordering Pakistan, with easy access back and forth, was heavily populated prior to the war. It was a backward, poverty-stricken area with a low education level. The province is mountainous, with cultivated valleys producing double wheat, maize, rice and vegetable crops. The province contains 52 percent of Afghanistan's forested area, and timber harvesting was an important part of the province's economy. Paktia also possessed a large stock of cattle and goats.

RESULTS OF THE WAR

The provincial capital of Gardez and the border town of Khost have been the scenes of continuous battles during the war, and, although fighting has stopped in most of the province since the Soviet withdrawal, both cities have remained under siege. Due to its location on Highway 1, the road which connects Kabul with the south, Paktia has been a transit zone for many resistance groups. This has resulted in continued fighting between resistance forces and Kabul government forces.

POPULATION

PRE-WAR 498,000

EXISTING

30%

REFUGEES

70%

Seventy percent of the population fled to Pakistan, accounting for 9.18 percent of the refugee population in Pakistan and Iran.

Paktia's infrastructure has been devastated. Most of the villages have been bombed; half of the cattle and goat flocks has been killed; 90 percent of the irrigation system has been damaged; roads and bridges have been destroyed; and many mines have been scattered through the province.

Deforestation has become a major problem in the province, since timber harvesting has been carried out without provincial or local control, and clearcutting has resulted in serious erosion, flooding and silted water.

BUDGETS BY SECTOR

NGO ASSISTANCE

Paktia is inhabited by Pashtun tribes, which, through their independence and diverse tribal culture, have dominated the province. Since no single resistance party dominates the province, NGOs have been working with a variety of local commanders and their councils. Travel in the province has been relatively secure for NGO personnel performing project monitoring and implementation missions.

Many inhabitants live in the refugee camps in the winter and return to their land in the spring and summer to their fields. NGOs started to assist these farmers in 1987 and have expanded this assistance in the following years. The relatively good roads to and from the Pakistan border enabled NGOs to increase their assistance in rural development, though as yet this has not resulted in significant permanent refugee return.

Until 1988, NGOs implemented dual program policies:
NGOs have stepped up their rural development assistance in Paktia, resulting in more programs for irrigation and road repair, and provision of improved seeds and fertilizers.

Trends in assistance

The UN regards Paktia as one of the 12 target provinces, where assistance should concentrate on preparing the rural areas for refugee return. NGOs have aimed their efforts in this direction since 1988 by replacing their limited cash for food programs with agricultural reconstruction assistance.

Paktia has the only demining program operated by an NGO in Afghanistan. Since 1989, NGOs, with the assistance of FAO and UNHCR, have brought in improved wheat seed and fertilizer to Paktia. These agricultural assistance projects will continue.

NGOs will continue their agricultural and infrastructural assistance to Paktia, not only to enable the remaining population to survive, but also to create an environment conducive to refugee return. Since it is relatively easy to work in Paktia and relations with commanders and their councils are generally good, an increase of assistance is advisable.
REFUGEE SITUATION

The biggest refugee population in the world is still Afghans. In Pakistan and Iran some five million Afghans have sought shelter during the last decade. On February 15, 1989, Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan, raising the expectation that significant numbers of refugees living in Pakistan would return. Instead a continuing influx of new refugees into the camps in Pakistan has offset the small trickle of refugees returning to Afghanistan. The only sizable numbers of returnees have left from Baluchistan where an estimated 30,000-50,000 refugees have returned home. Still, this figure represents only .014 percent of the total refugee population.

CURRENT STATUS INSIDE AFGHANISTAN

War continues inside Afghanistan. The resistance continues to battle the communist government for control of the countryside. Economic instability brought on by ten years of systematic destruction of the agriculture of Afghanistan continues to create hardships for Afghans living in the rural areas. Farmers in some resistance controlled areas cannot afford high food prices and are threatened with relocation or starvation. Residents of Kabul and the government-controlled provincial capitals, on the other hand, are sometimes prevented from obtaining wheat from the resistance-controlled areas of the countryside.

CURRENT REFUGEE STATUS

Refugees, who have endured the hardships of the refugee camps for up to ten years, are reluctant to leave their fragile resources inside the camps to face precarious political and economic conditions back in their home land. Families fear the continued threat of bombardments and confrontation by militias.

The numbers of refugees who have returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran are very small. In the past year, in fact, a continuing influx of new refugees into the camps in Pakistan has offset the small trickle of refugees returning to Afghanistan. The only sizable numbers of returnees have left from Baluchistan, where an estimated 30,000-50,000 refugees have returned home. Still, this figure represents only .014 percent of the total refugee population. Bigger numbers of seasonal returning farmers go back to their land to prepare the grounds for reconstruction. They return to Pakistan in the winter. The Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan is currently carrying out a survey investigating the extent of seasonal return of refugees.

CURRENT BUDGET STATUS

Cutbacks by major funding sources threaten to leave the Afghan refugees without the support they need during the coming year. The following list itemizes some of the most significant reductions:

- To date, in the current calendar year, only 341,000 metric tons of wheat have been pledged to WFP to feed the refugees. Based on an annual estimated need of 60,200 metric tons, this will create a potential shortfall of 26,000 metric tons of wheat.
The 1990 budget for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has declined over the past three years from $43 million in 1988 to $33 million in 1990.

The 1990 budget for the Bureau of Refugee Programs (BRP) of the American Government has been cut 19%, from $370 million to $300 million.

The NGOs which supply the unregistered refugees, numbering approximately half a million persons, are in doubt about their ability to sustain emergency help in the form of wheat and water. Many NGOs are facing 1990 budget cuts.

The Government of Pakistan (GOP) is assuming an ever-increasing burden in hosting the refugees. The GOP donates approximately 150,000 metric tons of wheat from its own stores to the refugees every year, to balance the WFP's annual shortfall.

Given their reality the refugees are not returning as anticipated, the cutbacks in funding contribute to potentially explosive conditions within the current year.

ASSISTANCE

The Afghan refugees, despite living in difficult conditions in the camps, have benefited in certain ways by the attentions of the NGOs and major donors. For example, the infant mortality rate in some refugee camps has been lowered by half from what it was in Afghanistan prior to the war. Immunizations have dramatically increased during the last ten years, improving refugees' chances of longer and healthier lives. Many children and adults living in the camps have received basic literacy and numeracy training which they might otherwise not have received.

As a consequence, the refugees have a higher level of expectations for their lives which contributes to their unwillingness to depart from the security of the camps for conditions they know to be less stable and much less secure.

SUMMARY

Despite some gains in health and education, life in the refugee camps is grim with no hope for improvement in the coming year. Budget cuts threaten to decrease the existing rations available to registered refugees. Unregistered refugees are dependent on food and water from NGOs which themselves are facing budget cuts. The continued war and economic instability prevent any sizable return and observers agree present conditions will prevail for the next two to five years at a minimum.
EMERGENCY FOOD SHORTAGE

A food shortage of drastic proportions exists in the northern Afghanistan provinces of Badkshan, Samangan, Jowzjan, Faryab and Badghis, threatening 500,000 people with famine. A recent observer says that the current situation may be worse than the famine of 1971, and that 20% of the people in the affected provinces may die of starvation by spring if emergency food relief is not made available.

BACKGROUND

The current food shortage has its roots in the steady degradation of agriculture over the past ten years due to war, political upheaval, wheat seed depreciation, livestock diminution, and poor agricultural practices. However, a severe outbreak of locust and sunn pest infestation over the last four years as well as unusually harsh late spring and early fall killing frosts in 1989 have seriously exacerbated the situation. Any one of these factors, taken by itself, would create serious problems in wheat production in these provinces. The combination of factors has created a devastating wheat storage.

Locusts

Locust infestation is a major contributing factor to today's food shortage. However, locusts are not an unusual occurrence in the wheat producing regions of Northern Afghanistan. Routine locust control was practiced before the war with insecticides made available through the cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) and the Soviet Union.

The recent outbreak of the insects has been allowed to go virtually unchecked during the past 10 years, partially as a result of the continuing conflict between the Soviet Union, the GOA and the Mujahideen. The political stalemate has created obstacles to the release of government owned stocks of BHC, a pesticide used to kill locusts, to farmers in the resistance controlled areas of the countryside.

Sunn pests

The Sunn pest infestation poses a slightly different problem. Sunn pests are equally as destructive to wheat as locusts, but are not as easily eradicated with chemical pesticide application. Sunn pest infestation is directly attributable to a general decline in agriculture, and a program to combat the insects must take into account insecticide application in the short-term and agricultural improvement practices in the long term.
SCOPE OF THE CURRENT WHEAT SHORTAGE

The total area confirmed as infested with locust, sunn pest or both is 2.7 million jeribs (half a million hectares), based on a survey carried out by the Swedish Committee in 1989. The survey enumerators could only visit a small part of each province, however, so this figure should be considered to be an absolute minimum. The scope of the problem has been confirmed in frequent visits by journalists and travelers. The amount of wheat needed to restore the balance is estimated to be 225,000 tons.

POPULATION BELOW SUBSISTANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population Below Subsistence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HERAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>BADGHIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>FARYAB</td>
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<td>JOWZJAN</td>
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<td>SAMANGAN</td>
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<td>BADAKSHAN</td>
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Badghis province is the most severely affected, with an 84% yield loss affecting 22,000 persons. Samangan province has the greatest total infestation of any province, with nearly 0.8 million jeribs (155,000 hectares) affected, and 141,000 persons living below subsistence level. In Herat province, another 99,000 people are living below subsistence level.

The price of wheat has risen in some areas to twice its normal price. In Badghis province, for example, in December, 1989, the price of wheat in the countryside was Afs 275/ kg compared with Afs 130/ kg in Herat city, where government supplied wheat was available.

In times of low crop yield, farmers routinely sell off livestock, their primary asset, in order to cover their losses. During the war farmers in the affected provinces, however, have depleted their flocks and are currently being forced to sell off wedding jewelry, quilts and the last of their household objects in order to feed their families. Recent reports talk about an increasing migration from the region.

CURRENT ASSISTANCE

NGOs based in Peshawar, Pakistan have begun to implement a pilot program to combat the locusts, sunn pests and wheat shortage in northern Afghanistan. The program has trained 60 Afghans as agricultural extensionists to train farmers in the use of pesticides to control locusts and sunn pests and to promote improved agricultural practices to combat the long term effects of the sunn pests. In addition, the program has provided for the release of government owned stocks of BHC and other chemicals to be made available to farmers in both government controlled and Mujahideen controlled areas.

Food distribution programs, mainly wheat, have begun to be implemented by Operation Salam in conjunction with other UN agencies. The difficult circumstances and the inaccessibility of the area so far have limited the actual input. Nevertheless, this initial effort is hopefully paving the way for more substantial aid operations in the near future.

FUTURE ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Emergency supplies of wheat are needed in these affected regions. Already, many persons are being forced to leave their homes and become displaced within Afghanistan or refugees in Pakistan and Iran or, worse, to starve.

A six pronged attack, in conjunction with the UN and NGOs, is needed:

1) Continued provision of emergency wheat supplies to the affected areas and/or cash for food.

2) Insecticides to combat locusts and sunn pests.

3) Increased donations of draft power to compensate for the vast numbers of livestock lost during the ten years of war and to promote improved agricultural practices.

4) Delivery of improved wheat seed to farmers in the worst affected areas.

5) Continued agricultural extension to promote improvement of agriculture as a way of combating sunn pests over the long term.

6) Because roads between the major provincial centers and outlying rural areas are in chronic disrepair or impassable due to neglect or war damage, a necessary corollary to food and agricultural assistance will be assistance for road improvement projects in northern Afghanistan.

SUMMARY

Locusts, sunn pests, and critical killing frosts have created a food shortage of disastrous proportions, with the potential for causing a large migration of people from the northern provinces of Afghanistan.

Food assistance is urgently needed to combat the problem in the short term, and assistance in the form of agricultural extension programs and wheat seed will be needed for the long term.
NGOs AS IMPLEMENTOR

In the Second Consolidated Report, the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Economic Assistance programs relating to Afghanistan concluded:

"Over the years, NGOs have acquired considerable experience and expertise and have become familiar with the ways and means of operating inside Afghanistan. The commendable work which continues to be done by them calls for uninterrupted funding even though the method of work and the outreach may require continual adjustment to the fast-changing situation in Afghanistan."

NGOs are the leading project implementors in Afghanistan. Their main objectives during the years of war were to provide assistance to the population which remained inside the country. Since the Soviet withdrawal, NGOs have accepted a role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The UN agencies, which earlier worked only with the refugees, also became involved in the reconstruction effort after the Geneva Accords of April 1988, under the supervision of the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan, Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan.

FLEXIBILITY

NGOs are well-suited to the challenge of working inside Afghanistan. They bring freshness, vigor, and flexibility to the work. NGOs find effective solutions which are not hampered by routine opinions, nor by an excessive load of administrative work. Their strength lies in their commitment, their unconventional methods, and a pragmatic, down-to-earth approach. Their most successful strategy has been decentralization, whereby authority to make decisions is delegated from headquarters to field officers as much as possible, enabling NGOs to make fast decisions in the rapidly changing environment of Afghanistan.

COMPLEX SITUATION

The complexity of organizing programs for humanitarian assistance in a cross-border situation involves a whole range of problems not routinely found in a more normal situation. Being stationed in one country while carrying out aid in another, which in addition, is ravaged by war, means that most activities related to actual project work, such as surveys, implementation monitoring and evaluation are much more complex and cumbersome than they normally would be.

A specific difficulty in the case of Afghanistan, as compared to most other cross-border aid operations in the world today, is the absence of a centralized counterpart. NGOs have tried to solve this problem through establishing as direct a link as possible with local and
NGOs and the UN are both working for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. NGOs have used mainly UN-donated funds to achieve a 25 percent expansion of their operations during the second half of 1988 and 1989. The UN has also started implementation of its own projects in Afghanistan during the last year.

The UN and its aid agencies have relative strengths in dealing with the complexities of working inside Afghanistan. They bring the influence of an international network, established relations with governments, technical expertise, organizational resources for huge programs executed with governments as counterparts, and financial resources. However, UN agencies are sometimes hampered by top heaviness and fixed policies which result in a reluctance to delegate authority.

Nevertheless, NGOs and the UN continue to increase their work in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. While the ongoing war makes it imperative to maintain existing levels of relief for the refugee population in Pakistan, the potential for a large-scale repatriation effort and the necessity to prepare and create programs to support the rural economy in Afghanistan requires that NGOs continue their work inside Afghanistan. Finally, the thrust of the NGO cross-border programs continues to be to allow the population to remain inside the country, despite the ongoing war, and to prevent further refugee emigration.
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