

LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LRRD) IN AFGHANISTAN

Jalalabad: a resort town of change

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Jalalabad is one of the largest cities in Afghanistan. It is an attractive urban area for many reasons that are linked to its past history and its present economic and social development and geographical situation.

Jalalabad is located in the eastern region of Afghanistan in Nangarhar Province. Its proximity to the Pakistan border has provided an opportunity for exchange of resources and goods for many decades. This geographical location also facilitated the intermingling of different people, tribes, trade, culture and knowledge.

The city was created by Mughal rulers many centuries beforehand and at the beginning of the twentieth century it functioned as a resort town. The town was a pleasant and charming place where many people from Kabul chose to spend their holidays or weekend breaks. In the thirties, the journey from Jalalabad to Kabul took 90 minutes by car. During the cold winters in Kabul, many people enjoyed visiting Jalalabad where the climate is warmer and the landscape very different.

From this resort period, many private gardens were developed. Today, Jalalabad is renowned for its green areas, fruit trees and flowers. **Green spaces are a strong symbol** and represent **added value** for people and the environment they live in.

During the decades of conflict, the city expanded sporadically and its primary function changed from that of a resort town. It became a city where displaced and vulnerable people took refuge. Indeed, Jalalabad functioned as a retreat for many people who were fleeing the fighting in Kabul during the civil war. This situation of precariousness, danger and vulnerability had an impact on people needs,

their relationship with their environment and, in general, the way the city developed.

What are Jalalabad's distinguishing characteristics?

The historical Gardens, Saraje-e-Emarat and Amir Shaheed, near the bazaar are the oldest part of the city. Today, the city is composed of six districts that are centred around these Gardens and have been built at different times by different people (including King Zaher Shah, Daoud, during the Soviet occupation and the Municipality of 2003). These districts are fairly separate entities with different dynamics, economic resources and demographic potential. The city is connected with other areas by four main access routes that are characteristic of a *cardo decumanus*¹.

The land use plan of Jalalabad reflects the primary function of Jalalabad, that of a resort town and how this function changed during the decades of conflict. The city is predominantly composed of private households from the Kabul River in the north to the canal in the south. Within these limits, there are some areas where green spaces and agricultural areas predominate, evoking a memory of Jalalabad's past. Gardens already occupy an important place in the city and have great significance for the people of Jalalabad. The three Gardens of the city (Saraje-e-Emarat, Amir Shaheed and Abdul Haq) are large (35 hectares) and attract people for many reasons: sport, relaxation, historical and religious symbols. They represent Jalalabad's **heritage**, a symbol of its past resort period. Similarly, the city also has an important green belt and agriculture areas. In the outskirts, there are open fields and areas of intensive agriculture, the city's main source of income. Fruit and

¹ cf. the structure of the Gallo-Roman cities.

vegetable production is possible thanks to an **extensive irrigation network** that was built during the Soviet occupation. Water has important added value and is highly symbolic for Jalalabad citizens. The city looks like an oasis in a desert. On approaching the city, Jalalabad is overhanging with many varieties of flowers and trees.

Which inventory of city planning for Jalalabad city?

The city has retained some traces of its glorious past. In some areas, there are private luxury gardens containing palm trees, bougainvillea, olive trees, sunflowers, old acacias and many other plants. People of Jalalabad continue to meet the public gardens, near the canal or along the Kabul River where children enjoy diving and swimming.

During the war, city planning continued in an uncontrolled manner and local authorities tended to extend beyond the city limits. Additionally, many houses and much of the city infrastructure were destroyed. Today this tragic era is no longer visible as the ruins have been removed and damaged buildings rebuilt.

A rapid assessment of some urban sectors shows that the city has undergone irregular development. Each area and districts have their own potential, resources, weakness and dynamics.

- Residential areas are principally concentrated in districts 3, 5 and 6. The most common type of housing is that built by Afghan people themselves. Families build their own house at their own expense. These are traditional houses built of straw and bricks. In some places, there are some luxury villas with Pakistani architecture. Generally, rich people or property developers are responsible for building this type of house. Many of them are currently occupied by INGOs staff. In the north, we find the heritage of the Soviet occupation with the presence of multi-family housing, which are today occupied by Afghan families.

Land tenure is an important factor in understanding the distribution of these different types of habitat. During the war period, land tenure was disrupted by the constant flow of people (IDPs, refugees and others). Now, 50% of housing is composed of informal settlements. In most cases, people have set up their homes on government land. These areas pose a problem in terms of how to connect them to the city. One of the challenges for the municipality today is to connect these areas

and families to the city infrastructure. People living in these informal settlements work in the city and their children go to school. It is unimaginable today to encourage these people to leave or to remove them forcibly from the land. These informal settlements mean that the limits of the city are constantly changing. One of the main challenges facing stakeholders in urban development is how to include this type of settlement in the city.

The municipality, the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) and the government need to draw up a development plan for these areas and control their expansion.

The expansion of informal settlements has accelerated over the past two years with the closing of many camps on the border with Pakistan. Jalalabad is one of the first places that refugees choose to return to because insecurity levels are not too high and opportunities exist for finding work, help and goods.

- The water and sanitation network is incomplete even though water is the city's most important resources. An estimated 30% of households are connected to the water supply pipelines. Drinking water in Jalalabad is supplied through Karezes and boreholes. Whether a household has access to drinking water depends on their location and income. Since the seventies, some international organisations (Japan Company, DACAAR, UNOPS) have been working on the rehabilitation and the construction of new pipelines. Today, ICRC is running a large Water-Habitat project that aims to improve the water supply network in four areas in the city.

Water is the city's most important resource and a source of wealth. Unfortunately, water resources are currently being wasted and some Jalalabad citizens and expatriate staff are not fully aware of the value of water. Jalalabad recently suffered seven years of drought and this situation posed numerous problems for irrigation and supply of drinking water. These difficulties could arise again at any time.

- The electricity network does not cover the same areas as the water supply network and not all households in the city have access to electricity. The Darunta dam provides the electricity for the city. Originally, the dam supplied 40 to 45 megawatts of electrical power but silting and damage to the system has reduced its actual output to 9-10

megawatts. The dam was built during the Soviet occupation and the station requires investment and new technology. All the instructions are in Russian. There are frequent power cuts. Many users have their own generating capacity, using either newer, foreign supplied generators or locally built units.

- Transport infrastructure is limited and roads are irregularly planned and tarmacked. Jalalabad's location between Kabul and Pakistan means that large numbers of trucks and vehicles pass through the city because, at present, there is no bypass. This situation poses many problems such as congestion, road safety, air pollution, noise pollution and aggressive behaviour. There is no highway road or other highway codes for regulating the traffic. Everyone drives as they choose, as fast as they want. Furthermore, another problem is the diversity of means of transport and vehicles in the town. On the same road, there are pedestrians, bicycles, motorbikes, horse-drawn carts, donkeys, rickshaws, cars, buses, trucks and 4-wheel drive vehicles. Many streets have severely damaged roadbeds with open trenches, which oblige drivers to swerve around them. Not all the roads are tarmacked yet. The municipality has recently agreed to design and install a new road sign system. Unfortunately, some of the road signs do not correspond to the reality of road traffic and people of Jalalabad do not respect them. This project of installing new road signs could benefit from an awareness campaign. There is a project with the Pakistani government to create a new railway network from Tchaman or Queta in Pakistan to Kandahar. Indeed, the road network surrounding Jalalabad is incomplete and this poses a problem of connecting the city to others areas, as well as the disillusion of many villages in the intermediate environment of Jalalabad.

- Waste is one of the most important urban problems in Jalalabad. On the whole, the population is not aware of the major health problems that can be caused by waste that is not properly disposed of. It is common for people to discard rubbish randomly, with rubbish accumulating in alarming proportions in market areas. In many areas in the city, rubbish is swept or thrown into roadside drainage ditches. These ditches carry excess irrigation water, raw sewage or a mixture of both. In other areas, sanitation teams are rarely able to clean all the ditches or are unable to access them all. Ditches may remain for weeks as stagnant, garbage-filled pools, full

of breeding insects. Most people burn waste that accumulates in the drainage network, the problem being that waste blocks the flow of sewage water. If the municipality fails to designate a proper and legal place to dispose of rubbish, then the situation is likely to persist, and even get worse as time goes on. It is essential that the government carries out a prevention campaign to inform and educate the population about the risks involved. One of priorities for the development of the city is to build a sanitary landfill.

The limits of the city are constantly changing according to the water supply network, the electricity network and the transport network. Maybe, it is one of reasons that limits are not clear in people's mind. Jalalabad city is not a defined spatial entity. It functions as six districts which are inter-connected. Each district has its own water supply network, electricity network and road network. Some of the housing in each district is distinct from other districts. Some areas in the city are more involved in trade and commerce, which help boost the local economy. Each district has its own spatial dynamics.

Urban planning documents as a basis for future development in Jalalabad

Urban planning in Jalalabad is currently based on four planning documents that have been drawn up at different periods, by different authorities and on the basis of different resources and needs.

These planning documents correspond to different levels of intervention.

Daoud designed the Master Plan of 1970, which is today completely outdated in relation to the current urban potential and city dynamics. The municipality is continuing to use this document even though it agrees that it requires updating.

The "Five year development strategy for Nangarhar province" document was drawn up in light of Afghan Compact, Afghan National Development Strategy and covers proposed projects for the year 2006. This document was created by the **Provincial Development Coordination Committee** following a "comprehensive debate" and approved by the provincial governor. Some of the projects for Jalalabad (construction of a new airport in 2008, a new dam, a bypass) are very ambitious, given current resources and the extent of urban problems in the city. These

projects fall within a development approach and will take time to implement.

The Master Plan of 2003 is a projection of future needs and city infrastructure. The MoUD and the municipality do not use this document because they do not have the sufficient budget. It is a map done by freehand and does not indicate the location nor the current limits of the city. Some of the information in the key is missing on the map.

The municipality is implementing many projects both inside and outside the city that correspond to different levels of intervention with different priorities:

Large-scale projects are more typical development projects which require time to implement (creation of three satellite towns and a bypass outside the city from Kabul to Tokham).

Others are being carried out inside the city and can be divided into two categories:

Small-scale projects, such as building drainage channels, asphalt roads, an observation tower. These projects aim to have a local impact.

Medium-scale projects, such as a bypass road inside the city, slaughterhouse, modern market and a big bus station. Those projects will have a wider impact, both inside the city and the surrounding area. Those projects will attract people from different places and districts and will increase Jalalabad's economic power. They correspond to the services offered by big cities.

A crossed analysis of urban assessment and planning documents: how to coordinate these planning documents?

Various people involved in the planning of Jalalabad have been responsible for drawing up these different planning documents. All these projects have been planned without conducting a spatial analysis and study of urban assessment. Jalalabad city is hemmed in between Kabul River in the north and the canal in the south. Therefore, the **expansion of the city is limited** because agricultural land lies beyond the river and the canal. At present, housing and infrastructure is expanding outwards over agricultural fields, thus destroying their potential. This new housing will also require infrastructure and different resources that require significant funds.

The "Five year development strategy for Nangarhar Province" document gives guidelines for urban development. It covers

large, medium and small-scale projects inside and outside the city. The Master Plan of 2003 is a visual representation of projects registered in "Five year development strategy for Nangarhar Province" document. Municipality projects have not yet been mapped. No projects have been represented on the Master Plan of 2003, except the creation of a new satellite town in the north (Qasamabad). The location of the new bypass road on this Master Plan does not correspond to the bypass road planned inside the city by the municipality. At present, the municipality does not intend to implement this Master Plan. It draws up plans for projects in parallel without referring to this urban planning document.

Are urban projects coherent with the urban assessment?

Weaknesses in spatial analysis help explain why the different planning documents do not reflect the real urban situation. Afghan authorities in Jalalabad do not work with maps and find it difficult to localise areas with their infrastructure and dynamics. Their relationship with space is limited because they are not used to planning their projects and ideas on maps.

Some of the different projects implemented by the municipality will have an important impact on the geographical, social and urban environment. For example, there are plans to build a new bus station on agriculture land and the municipality also wants to create a new city centre in this location. This new coach station will replace all small bus stations in the town. This concentration of transport (cars, roads and buses) will attract people, services and shops. The traffic will create noise pollution for neighbouring residential areas and air pollution. Moreover, the increased flow of traffic will require space and parking near the new bus station. All of this infrastructure will be built on agriculture land that represents a resource and added value for the city.

Another example is the creation of a new bypass road inside the city, which will also increase traffic and pollution within the city. Building such as large road requires space but streets in Jalalabad are not wide. The municipality will be required to knock down walls and houses in order to build this new bypass. This procedure takes time and many people are likely to be unhappy with these changes.

*It is advisable to carry out an **impact study** on all big projects that are planned for Jalalabad area. This study may reveal that some projects are poorly situated or require more reflection and time for implementation.*

An analysis of systemic interactions would be show that the city is a **complex entity**, with **dynamic feedback**. We have to understand the city as a global entity. All sectors are linked and a wide-reaching vision and understanding is required to ensure that projects are successful.

What type of urban governance for Jalalabad city?

City planning is currently undertaken by the MoUD, others Ministries (Public Works, Electricity, etc.), the municipality and some international organisations who are implementing specific projects. In most cases, there is poor linkage between ministerial departments. They are not informed about projects that are being implemented by other departments. Each department tends to compartmentalise and is directly dependent on the relevant Ministry in Kabul. There is not enough communication, sharing and contact between these departments. Moreover, there is not enough communication and sharing of information between the municipality and these departments.

A large number of international organisations and INGOs are currently working in Jalalabad, in many sectors. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand who is doing what and where. Some organisations are responsible for implementing projects from the start to the end. Others are just funding projects proposed by local government. In the urban sector, international aid is **poorly coordinated** because there is not enough communication and sharing of information between organisations. The ICRC, who is working on water supply, is not well informed of UNDP and UN-HABITAT projects in the urban sector. This poses a **problem of coherence for the urban development** of the city.

During different meetings with actors involved in urban development, there is sometimes a sense of competition as stakeholders try to juggle donor funding, resources and different issues at stake. Some organisations are involved in emergency programmes, others in rehabilitation and development projects. At all levels of intervention, these projects should be coordinated in time and space. They do not require same resources, workers, funding and

time but they all contribute to the development of Jalalabad.

The **Provincial Development Committee** (PDC) is a new institutional representative body which was created in early 2006. It is composed of the Governor, all UN agencies, some ministerial departments, a technical group, ACBAR and some INGOs.

The PDC aims to 1) facilitate communication, sharing of information and discussions between all stakeholders, NGOs and UN agencies; 2) facilitate the integration of strategy and plans into different sectors; and 3) develop a multi sector vision on project design and decision making. The PDC could help contribute to **constructive discussions and debates** between these actors. The concerns and projects of each department (Irrigation, Health, Refugees, etc.) all have an impact on urban projects and city planning. Communication between different ministerial departments has been inadequate for a long time. Now it has become a **necessity** for the development and good governance of the city.