



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

**WATER SECTOR REVIEW
IN AFGHANISTAN (2001-2006)**



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I would sincerely like to thank all those who opened their doors and spent time sharing their ideas and opinions. I have had the chance to meet a number of highly experienced and dedicated people and their willingness to share their experience has helped me collect relevant information and develop a critical analysis.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIMS	Afghan Information Management Service
AKDN	Agha Khan Development Network
AREU	Afghanistan Research Information and Evaluation Unit Mapping System
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
CDC	Community Development Council
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan refugees
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc.
EC	European Commission
EIRP	Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFW	Food for Work
FP	Facilitating Partner
GAA	German Agro Action
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
ha	Hectare = 5 <i>jerib</i>
HQ	Headquarters
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ID	Irrigation Department
IDP	Internal Displaced People
IOM	International Office of Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KRBP	Kunduz River Basin Programme
LRRD	Link Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
MAAHF	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and Food
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MIS	Management Information System
MIWRE	Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources, and Environment
MMI	Ministry of Mines and Industry
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MWP	Ministry of Water and Power (former Ministry)
NDF	National Development Framework
NEEP	National Emergency Employment Programme
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RAMP	Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Programme
RBA	River Basin Approach
RO	Reporting Officer
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
TAPA	Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan
TCEO	FAO's Technical Emergency Operation Division
TCI	FAO's Investment Centre Division
TGA	Transitional Government of Afghanistan

UNCHSUNHCS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNHABITAT)
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations for Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations
WRI	Water Resources and Irrigation Sub-Sector
WSM	Watershed Management
WSS	Water Supply & Sanitation
WUA	Water Users Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Afghan context has changed considerably since the end of the Taliban regime. Many new stakeholders have begun working in Afghanistan and hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested to rebuild the country. The humanitarian situation has improved significantly. Better security and stability together with higher rainfall have allowed longer-term approach.

However, the current phase of transition from a situation of war and humanitarian emergency to peace and development raises a variety of problems and challenges, including the coordination of the myriad of stakeholders and their differences; weaknesses of the national institutions; insecurity; planning and programming for both quick impact and long-term effects.

The various organisations involved in the reconstruction and development of the country face the tremendous challenge of developing a full understanding /analysis of these changes in order to design well-adapted programmes. Since 2001, Groupe URD has been involved in various research projects covering the link between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development. This analysis aims at providing real-time information and support for stakeholders involved in the aid intervention process.

The LRRD programme focuses on several core sectors of interest. The present study aims at analysing the former and current institutional context in the water and irrigation sector. This sector review was limited to rural areas.

Fair and efficient management of the water resources within the country and with neighbouring countries is an essential condition for peace, security and stability. A better mobilisation and use of the available water resources based on longer-term environmental and social considerations is a priority for the recovery and development of Afghanistan.

After 2001, the international community supported the process of political and institutional reconstruction and aid increased. A new Afghan Government with its relevant ministries and other government institutions has emerged. A sector based institutional (re)structuring has been carried out at the relevant ministries. It is essential that all stakeholders take part in the institution development process, establishing frameworks and main directions, for an efficient and coordinated action.

From 2002 onwards, consultants and various organisations planned and carried out major institutional reforms in the water sector. This has led to the development of appropriate policies and strategies and to the capacity building of the relevant government institutions.

The Ministry of Energy and Water (former MIWRE) has been designated as the main institution to manage water resources. The new policy framework and institution building in general is based on the internationally recognised concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) based on a River Basin (IRBM) approach.

However, in terms of institutional set up and organisation, many aspects still require attention. Policies and other documents produced to this day are (by nature) quite broad and conceptual. Drafting regulations, strategies and plans for each sub-sector (in accordance with the global policy) might help to adapt the IRBM and the policies to the Afghan reality.

Apparently, a consensus was carried out taking into account policy and institutional reforms. Whether this is a true consensus, or a consequence of the ignorance and non-interest from some stakeholders, remains to be seen.

Since 2001, many projects have been designed, funded and implemented in the irrigation and (drinking) water supply sectors. This is considered to be a top priority to assist in the reintegration of returnees, minimise the effect of drought and strengthen food security.

Over the 2001-2005 period, three main channels or mechanisms of intervention can be observed. They are listed hereinafter in chronological order.

1. Micro projects, mostly implemented by NGOs (and some UN agencies) can be seen as a continuation of relief interventions. During our meetings, a few new stakeholders expressed criticisms towards this type of projects. The relevance and quality of the activities are highly disparate. The myriad of NGOs implementing different types of projects, weak coordination and follow-up mechanisms and limited control by governmental institutions make it difficult to obtain a global picture of the achievements both in terms of quantity and in terms of quality. Micro-projects are nowadays very rare.

2. General/non focal government led programmes. This type of programme was initiated in 2003 and covers a wide range of interventions and activities. They aim to facilitate the political, institutional and economic transition. Some of these activities, such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), have had a significant influence and impact on the water sector. The poor or inexistent linkage with the water sector, the line ministry and other relevant stakeholders is a main problem. NGOs play an important role within these programmes as implementing or “facilitating” partners.

3. Sector-based government led programmes: Since 2004, institutional reforms and the strengthening of the water sector have been followed by the emergence of specific sector-based programmes. Various types of stakeholders, such as multilateral and bilateral donors, consultancy firms and independent experts, are involved in these programmes. NGOs do not have a major role to play except in the EC-funded KRB Programme. Only the FAO and EC as long-term players are supporting this transition and transferring memory.

References to past experience, to former stakeholders and to the Afghan context in the current sector are too limited. We can underline an important lack of field research and studies to fill the gap of holistic understanding and knowledge. Technical knowledge and a thorough understanding of the Afghan reality and recent changes **would be very helpful to improve the relevance and the sustainability of many projects.**

Institutional changes within the water sector have drastically reduced the scope of intervention for NGOs. The role and influence of NGOs are nowadays limited to the core activities (social, health, education, livelihood, etc.) of humanitarian agencies, which are outlined in the first pillar of the National Development Framework. In the water sector, the main contribution of NGOs is limited to water supply and sanitation.

Despite IRBM policy, water, and especially irrigation, is currently regarded as a technical and engineering domain that is reserved to (international) specialists, government institutions and the private (local) sector, excluding NGOs de facto. In light of the experience of the KRBP, the likely development over the coming years is that specific activities required for IWRM/IRBM implementation may provide NGOs with the opportunity to play an important role once again in this sector. These activities include community mobilisation and capacity building, extension work, social water management and research.

Donors have adopted a variety of approaches regarding the sector-based programmes, often involving a combination of rehabilitation and complete development-type approaches. Presently, the majority of donors and stakeholders seems to have adopted their own strategy, taking into consideration and interpreting (or ignoring) the policy and reforms according to individual assessments and interests. The complex debate over which methodology or approach to adopt on irrigation is symptomatic of the diversity of positions and actions of the various stakeholders. A rehabilitation (transitory) approach versus (immediate or direct) development/modernisation strategy? Water management versus infrastructure rehabilitation? The numerous stakeholders have all developed their own arguments on this topic. No real diagnosis on the performance of irrigation schemes in Afghanistan has been carried out even though methodologies, tools and specialised institutions exist.

A more operational phase commenced in 2004. Unfortunately, significant levels of discrepancy can be observed between the main protagonists. At the MEW level, the lack of common strategy planning and programming is highly prejudicial. The lack of coordination and cooperation with the other ministries involved in the rural sector, such as MAAHF and MRRD is also an important issue.

Despite a significant reduction in the number of stakeholders (withdrawal of NGOs and micro individual projects), the emergence of several macro government-led programmes and the amendment of a *strategic policy framework*, activities in the water sector to this day remain isolated and disparate.

1 INTRODUCTION

Groupe URD (Emergency-Rehabilitation-Development) is a private research, evaluation and training institute. It has been working regularly in Afghanistan since 2000. Groupe URD has carried out “lesson learning exercises” on humanitarian aid, evaluations and training sessions in Central America, the Balkans, as well as in Afghanistan, from 2001 to 2003 under the ECHO-funded ‘Quality Project’.

LRRD research project: After this first phase, mainly focused on the early response, Groupe URD is now starting its new LRRD Programme focused on the linkages between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in policy and programming of the Afghan government, the EC, the NGO community. **Annexe 1** gives more details about the LRRD project from Group URD.

The LRRD project is closely coordinated with existing research and evaluation departments of the different ministries of the Afghan government, as well as with AREU and other initiatives (notably ACBAR).

Three main objectives:

- Learning and sharing lessons in this period of political and technical transition, through iterative multi-sector evaluations.
- Increasing and sharing knowledge and experience by carrying out applied research in rural and urban settings in specific fields (including food and economic security, health, housing and habitat), with a focus on the key issues identified during the lesson-learning process.
- Contributing to the capacity building efforts of the relevant ministries and Afghan NGOs through training.

The LRRD is a two-year project funded by the EC. It aims to draw lessons from current experiences to inform policy and programmes, for both NGOs and governmental institutions in Afghanistan. It seeks to do so by introducing innovative techniques, methodologies and concepts. The LRRD project focuses on six sectors: agriculture, nutrition, health, urban development, education and water.

1.1 Specific objectives and scope of the study

A sector review is being undertaken for the sectors mentioned above. It belongs to a preliminary phase, prior to the multi-sector report that will be conducted in 2006.

Within this study, it was decided to have a specific focus on water sector considering its utmost importance in Afghanistan with regards to economic, social and environmental aspects.

For various reasons it was decided to limit the scope of this study to the following sub-sectors or domains:

- **Irrigation**
- **Water Resources Management**

Underground water, urban water, (urban and rural) water supply and sanitation and hydropower sub-sectors were mostly excluded from the study.

The *institutional diagnosis* in the irrigation and overall water management fields aims to:

- Analyse the current institutional context and set-up, as well as the changes over the past years (before 2001).
- review and analyse the type of current stakeholders, programmes and strategies applied to the Afghan water sector, and its evolution since 2001
- Study more specifically the case of NGOs, and the links between both water (irrigation) and agriculture sectors.

Finally, the analysis and synthesis undertaken in this study aims at highlighting relevant information and specific findings on the water sector. Thus, this should serve decision makers and implementers in their planning process. This current report intends to present and analyse factual and basic elements.

1.2 Methodology

The study was mostly conducted by means of interviews with people from various institutions at both central and provincial/regional levels. No field visits of projects/programmes were carried out.

Interviews were conducted with most of the stakeholders involved in the water sector (cf. Annexe 2), including: ministries and government institutions, donors, implementing agencies (UN and private consulting firms), independent consultants, NGOs, etc. A number of meetings were held at the MEW (Ministry of Energy and Water) since the main stakeholders have offices there. It should be noted that a significant number of stakeholders in the water sector are new as they began implementing programmes just after the withdrawal of the Taliban regime.

Several meetings took place in Bamiyan, Kunduz, Ghazni, Herat and Jalalabad.

Another important part of the research was the review and analysis of various written reports and documents, collected from the numerous interlocutors met (cf. annexe 3).

Study limitations

This study is not an exhaustive analysis of the water sector but rather aims to provide an overall view of the water sector. The basic information has been collected during interviews and by means of written reports and documents. The analysis and assessment within this report are the author's own observations and points of view, although most of them have been shared with some of the interlocutors.

The main constraints faced are:

- Lack of time;
- Multiplicity of (past and current) stakeholders and programmes;
- Difficulty in meeting some people and obtaining information;
- Lack of transversal or sector-based analysis (especially before 2001)

1.3 Background and justification

The rural population's expectations have been put forward in surveys and some specific studies such as the NRVA 2003¹. Water comes as a priority for rural communities and demand is much higher than the current offer provided by numerous ongoing programmes.

¹ National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment by MRRD/WFP

Some bottom-up or demand driven programme approaches, as covered for instance by the NSP, aim to respond to these needs.

Within the NRVA exercise, female and male groups were interviewed and asked to name the three main development priorities they would like to see addressed by the Afghan Government. The rehabilitation of the irrigation system is the top priority for men, while improved quality and quantity of drinking water was the top priority for women and the second priority for men.

The ranking of intervention preferences / priorities for the entire sample gives the results below:

1. improved drinking water quality and quantity
2. rehabilitation of irrigation system
3. construction or rehabilitation of rural roads
4. improvement of health facilities
5. improvement of education facilities

It is confirmed by the NSP programme and the development plans drawn up in 2004 that the demand for improvement or creation of schemes came first.

The water sector has been severely affected by 24 years of war. The destruction and collapse of the existing water infrastructures due to lack of maintenance are considerable. Rural life and traditional rights, rules and regulation systems like water management have been highly disrupted as well. Climate changes have made water resources scarce in Afghanistan. This became particularly apparent during the years of drought as of the year 2000. All development efforts came to a standstill during wartime and Afghanistan swiftly began to lag behind this rapidly changing world. "Catching up with this high speed train" is proving to be very difficult.

Improved mobilisation of available water resources together with long-term environmental and social considerations are some of the important challenges facing all stakeholders involved in Afghan recovery and development. This goes hand in hand with both policy and programmes development.

2 WATER SECTOR INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Water/irrigation: a major stake in Afghanistan

Water resources in arid zones such as where Afghanistan is situated, are an issue of utmost importance. Water has also been a source of internal or external tension and conflicts between neighbouring countries and communities. In Afghanistan, the last 24 years of war and conflict, in addition to a series of droughts, have increased the inequalities and conflicts between villages, districts and provinces throughout the country as a whole. This *vision of a peaceful and prosperous future* outlined in the National Development Framework relies predominantly on a fair and efficient water management between the domestic users and neighbouring countries. Appropriate development policies, strategies and institutional reforms are necessary as a basis for planning and programming in the development sector. Afghanistan's present institutional context is complex and the water sector is a reflection of the current institutional structures.

Since 2001, the new Afghan government and institutions, with the help of international agencies and consultants, have made considerable progress. The following part of this report provides a summary of the main outputs and consequences.

2.2 Water-related institutions in Afghanistan

The National Development Framework (NDF) (April 2002) forms the basis for the extensive institutional development process currently underway in Afghanistan. The water sector is covered in the second pillar of the NDF, namely "**Physical reconstruction and natural resources**", while the first pillar deals with "humanitarian and human and social capital" and the third pillar is related to "private sector development"². The NDF stresses the importance of water as a resource for the recovery and development of the country as a whole. It also highlights the absolute necessity to improve the management of this precious resource.

Following the NDF, the Government has designated the former Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment (MIWRE) as a responsible authority to protect, manage and develop water resources and irrigation systems based on the river basin policy, strategy and management approach and consistent with the objectives of NDF. MIWRE has become the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW) in the new government (Dec. 2004).

Prior to the preparation and implementation of an overall "**Strategic Policy Framework for the Water Sector**" by MIWRE, a substantial amount of work was carried out and this is described in chronological order in the following pages.

The following boxes give an indication of the main contents and directions outlined for the water sector in this policy document.

² NDF paper: "Pillar 1 is related to education and vocational training, health and nutrition, livelihoods and social... The first is to use humanitarian assistance and social policy to create the conditions for people to live secure lives and to lay the foundations for the formation of sustainable human capital. The second is the use of external assistance to build the physical infrastructure that lays the basis for a private sector-led strategy of growth, in such a manner as to support the building of human and social capital. The third pillar "private sector development" is the creation of sustainable growth, where a competitive private sector becomes both the engine of growth and the instrument of social inclusion through the creation of opportunity.

Vision

Our vision is to improve livelihood of the society through development and implementation of the integrated Water Resources Management with sustainable use of the water resources, based on internationally acceptable socio-economic, environmental norms and standards.

Goal

The policy goal is to develop and manage water resources in a sustainable manner, through active involvement of all the users' organisations, institutions and the private sector to secure and improve livelihood, the environment and support national economic development.

Source: Extracts from the "Strategic Policy Framework for the Water Sector" document

The policy framework is built around an integrated water resources management concept, based on the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) approach. In recent years, following the lead of the World Water Council and other organisations, donors have increasingly promoted this Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach, as for the case of Afghanistan.

The IWRM which aims for equity, efficiency and sustainability is a highly demanding approach. It requires:

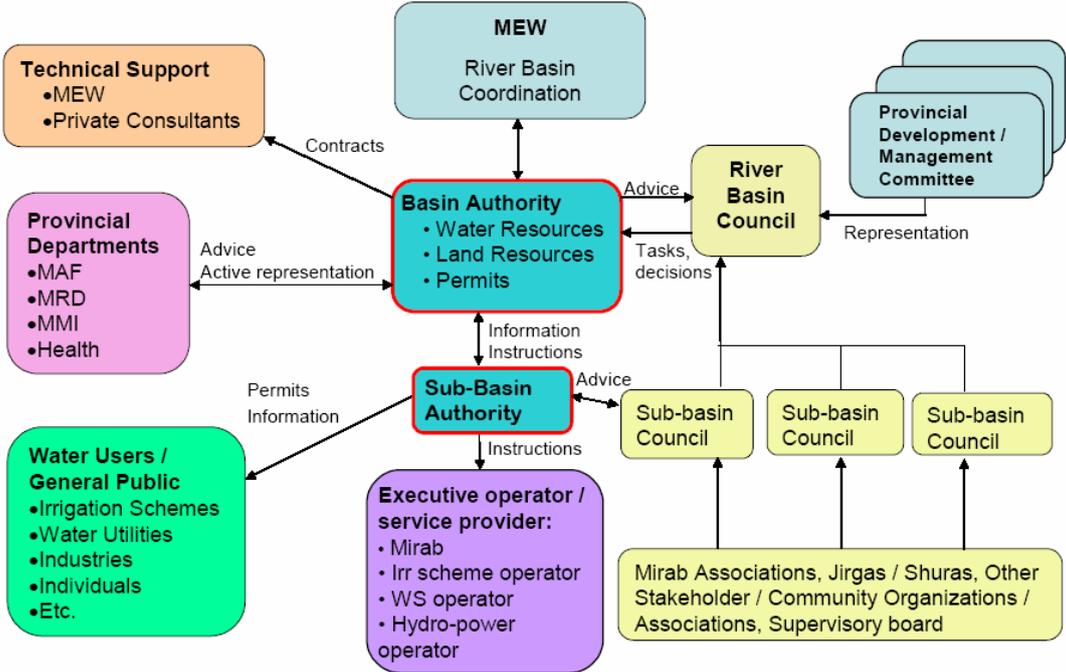
- a comprehensive evaluation of resources;
- an assessment of current and future demand;
- the creation of a management body with representation of all water users and;
- the drawing up and enforcement of equitable water-use rules.

In principle, through this approach, water has to be equitably allocated, addressing social and environmental long-term needs, and at the same time recognising their economic value.

In the near future, the establishment of River Basin Authorities (RBA) and delegation of power from the MIWRE/MEW to the RBA in the five main basins of the country in could be a first step towards an integrated approach to Water Resources Management.

The IRBM is expected to prove useful in the development and management of water resources, efficient use of irrigation water, and reduction of water losses, sustainable maintenance of irrigation systems, and ensuring a fair division of water between the users.

Figure 1: Institutional and organisational framework within the IRBM chosen approach



Source: Water Sector Reform Project, Ministry of Energy and Water with support from GTZ, July 2005

Water use and application takes many forms, even in Afghanistan where irrigation mobilises more than 90% of the resources. The policy framework underlines the need for specific sub-sector policies and strategies, especially in the development of an IWRM, irrigation, rural and urban water and sanitation, hydropower, and other economic uses.

Although, the MEW remains the main institution sharing sub-sectors with other government bodies, various functions and responsibilities concerning water management have been redistributed among the Afghan ministries and government institutions as following:

- **Urban water supply** with the municipalities and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
- **Rural Water Supply** currently managed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
- **Irrigation water** by MEW (ex MIWRE): on-farm management and irrigation extension are the joint responsibility of MEW and MAAHF and WUA
- **Hydropower** by MEW
- **Underground WR** by MEW (research, studies) and Ministry of Mines and Industries (MMI) (quality rest and exploitation).

2.3 Important dates for the water sector in Afghanistan

The following events help explain in a more detailed way the various steps and events which have marked the water sector before and after 2001.

2.3.1 Before 2001

An analysis of the situation leading up to 2001 has not been a priority in the post-2001 institutional development work. In 2001, at the time of the international community’s interventions, state institutions were indeed weak or non-existent due to the 24 years of war and instability, and the country was lagging severely behind in terms of water management policies, laws and regulations. This backdrop is still apparent and should be taken into

account when drawing up policies and institutions. Institutional memory remains in the hands of a few people and written material covering this history is scarce.

- 1960's & 70's: **Construction and establishment of formal and large multi-purpose irrigation schemes** with the development of hydropower;
- 1971-72: **Split within the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI)** between agriculture and irrigation. A 'survey for soil and water' department is created, then a general directorate, which finally became an independent Ministry of Water and Power (MWP).

Finally, at the end of the seventies, the MWP was in charge of administrating the irrigation and hydropower sub-sectors, the RDD (Rural Development Department) was responsible for the water supply and sanitation sector and the traditional irrigation systems, and the Ministry of Public Works controlled the urban water sanitation. The MAAHF could keep on influencing research on the irrigation and water management topics within its research department.

- **1981: Creation and adoption of the water law** which combined traditional Islamic laws or principles, and new principles and inputs brought in by the Soviet regime.
- 1988: The MIWRE is created along with the MPW in order to manage hydrological networks, the development of water resources and large-scale irrigation facilities.

During this period, the MAAHF, and the agriculture sector as a whole, were relieved of the majority of their responsibilities on irrigation and water management, even though the largest proportion of water consumption goes towards agricultural activities. The division between irrigation and the Ministry of Agriculture created an institutional gap on water management. As a result of the strong influence of the Soviet regime, the institutions created for managing water resources and irrigation have mostly focused their work and influence on civil engineering aspects, omitting the overall water management issues and their role on agriculture. The seventies and eighties were marked by serious tensions and conflicts among the Afghan institutions.

2.3.2 Post 2001

- April 2002: "**National Development Framework**" by the transition Government
- May 2002: "**Kabul Understanding on Water Resource Management & Development in Afghanistan**" workshop by MIWRE and UNICEF
- 2002-03: Country divided up into five river basins, basis of the new IWRP policy by AIMS and FAO; editing of the watershed atlas of Afghanistan
- January 2004: "Management & development of Water Resources & environment in Afghanistan" seminar by MIWRE and FAO
- 2004-05: "**Strategy Policy Framework for Water sector**" drafted and amended
- 2004-05: Sub sectors policies drafted "**Water Resource Management policy and strategy**" and "**Irrigation Policy**"
- Mid 2004: Starting of the Kunduz River Basin Programme (KRBP) (cf. description in the following chapter) seen at the MEW and at the institution level as a pilot experience on the implementation and development of river basin management - the concept of integrated management of the country's water resources which form the basis for the new water policy.
- Dec. 2004: Mergence of the MWP (Ministry of Water and Power) and MIWRE to MEW;
- March 2005: "**Five years action plan on groundwater development and management sector**" by Ministry of Mines and Industries
- 2005: Drafting of the policy for the Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Sector + "investment development plan" by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing

2.3.3 To come...

- Drafting of regulations from the various general and specific policies
- Implementation of the new institutional arrangements set up at central level, provincial and local levels through the emerging sector based programmes;
- Revision and adoption of the 1981 water law;
- Drafting of a “water management strategy plan” and “action plan”;
- Creation and establishment of a water apex body/authority.

2.4 The major role of the international communities

The implementation of the institutional changes described above prompted a significant number of specific tasks and challenges, as detailed below:

- Linking the regional (river basin) and the local/users level (watershed and irrigation schemes management) to central government with new functions, roles and responsibilities to be defined and applied.
- Establishment of decentralised technical bodies with the involvement and empowerment of water users. Development of ad-hoc institutions (Water User Associations) with consideration to the traditional system (*mirab*), for an equitable, effective and sustainable water management, and the operation and maintenance of irrigation schemes.
- Restoring (or creating) government authority in rural areas against anarchic, informal, individual power based systems developed during the war period.
- Dissemination and application of the new policies, laws and regulations in order to improve confidence and awareness on the IWRM at the user level but also at official/institution levels. Raising awareness can be achieved through public campaigns but also by carrying out rehabilitation work and development programmes including activities in favour of community awareness, mobilisation and capacity strengthening.
- Full acceptance and commitment of the policy makers, planners and programmers to the new policy and institution framework requires good coordination and collaboration within all the Afghan institutions with responsibilities in the sector, and among the donors and implementing agencies.
- Participation of users: Although the MEW has assumed the overall management responsibility of water resources, the day-to-day management of water will be carried out with the active participation of the water users and water allocation decisions will be made at the lowest appropriate level.
- Transfer of knowledge from other country experiences to planners and programmers: a technical advisor at the MEW was keen on learning about the French experience on IRBM.
- Filling the 24-year gap of data and information, and overall knowledge, required to implement the IWRM and the rehabilitation or modernisation of the irrigation schemes. Development of efficient management information systems and of comprehensive research and appraisal works; rehabilitation of a proper hydro-meteorological monitoring network.
- Capacity building among the MEW central and provincial staff. The civil servants currently working in the water sector have a strong civil engineering profile but they lack up-to-date expertise. Most of them have no knowledge about water management and their understanding of new technical and management orientations is limited. Training and capacity building is required urgently. Efforts in this area should be linked to the reform of Kabul University and Polytechnics school in order to train a new generation of specialists in new water management techniques and trends. Following the decentralisation process, building the material capacity of regional offices is also essential. The representation of the Afghan government in the water sector is quite weak compared with the agriculture and rural development sectors.
- Coordination among government bodies. Although clarifications have been made regarding the functions and responsibilities of the Ministries and government institutions,

some overlapping and grey zones remain. The integrated approach should be reflected in a cross-sector coordination and feedback from the other line ministries. At the rural level for irrigation and water management interventions, proper collaboration between the MEW, MAAHF and the MRRD is essential, as it is currently limited or non-existent, according to the author.

3 STAKEHOLDERS, PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

A general and chronological overview of the situation in Afghanistan is useful in order to gain a full understanding of the current water/irrigation sector. Since 1989, four main periods shaped by political and institutional events, can be distinguished. These phases have inevitably had an impact on changes in the water sector at the operational level, as well as at the institutional level.

3.1.1 1989 – 1996: Post Soviet era and civil war

The analysis below is supported by the 1996 agriculture sector (including water resources and irrigation) comprehensive review written by the UNFAO (Walter Klemm; cf. annex 3 “references”).

During this period, the UN and NGOs were the main humanitarian stakeholders as Afghanistan was in turmoil due to the war. Almost all the UN agencies were involved in the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructures. The UN funding mechanism was at the time being operated via UNDP. UNOPS, through the Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation Programme (ARRP) and UNFAO, were markedly the most active. UNFAO (from Peshawar) was concentrating on the rehabilitation of intakes and canal structures in the east (Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman and Paktia). UNDCP, WFP, UNHCR, and partially UNCHS, were involved in the rehabilitation of infrastructure, mainly in canal de-silting and flood protection but also in the rehabilitation of hydraulic structures. At this time, the prevailing humanitarian concept within the UN agencies was the Quick Impact Project (QIP). In many cases, NGOs were subcontracted as implementing partners of the UN agencies.

The geographical identification, quantification of the amount of irrigated area rehabilitated between 1989 and 1996, and an evaluation of the outputs, has never been carried out.

This period was marked by an unbalanced geographical distribution of assistance in the country due to impossible access to many parts of the country where war or severe insecurity prevailed. The other major constraint was the lack or absence of coordination on rehabilitation activities in the irrigation sector among UN agencies and NGOs, and the reluctance of donors to invest in costly rehabilitation works in unstable context.

The funds provided by all agencies and NGOs for the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes reached almost US\$20 million for a period of six years or on average US\$3.5 million annually. The average cost of an irrigation rehabilitation scheme was estimated in 1993 at US\$200 per hectare for small schemes and US\$150 per hectare for larger schemes (FAO source).

3.1.2 1996 - 2001: Taliban regime

Relevant cross-sector information regarding funds and programmes within the irrigation sector could not be collected, although it showed a certain continuation from the previous period. The Taliban period was disrupted by the difficult relationship between the Taliban regime and the humanitarian community, with occasional withdrawals by UN and NGO staff from the field. Irrigation projects were affected by these political problems.

From 1996 onwards, the FAO advocated for improved organisation within the irrigation sector in order to strengthen cooperation between donors on one side, and between the UN and NGOs on the other. UNFAO took the leadership to bring the numerous individual interventions within a common policy and strategy framework. This initiative has failed and apparently coordination has barely improved as a result.

The humanitarian community was already coordinated by the NGO, ACBAR, which was created specifically for this purpose. In terms of the water sector, a water supply technical group was created as a result. Irrigation was then attached to the agriculture technical group, with apparently low efficiency and results.

3.1.3 2001 – 2004: Political and aid transition – From humanitarian action to development aid

The rapid and large influx of funds following the fall of the Taliban regime has not been managed and controlled by specific coordination mechanisms. In general, poor coordination and a high disparity in the quality of the individual interventions of the numerous NGOs observed before 2001 has intensified.

Basic mechanisms of humanitarian interventions in place before 2001 have remained the same through individual projects or interventions directly or indirectly (through some UN agencies) implemented by the myriad of NGOs.

This period has seen the emergence of new forms of aid and funding mechanisms, such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). Many bilateral and multilateral organisations have joined the ARTF in order to assist the Afghan government. The ARTF encompasses large, mostly multi purpose/non focal (non sector based), and government led programmes. In rural areas, the ARTF aims to help the reconstruction of the villages (health, water, education, etc.) infrastructure, the recovery of the rural economy and the building or strengthening of village institutions. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) launched in 2003 is one pillar of the ARTF intervention. The infrastructure section of the NSP focused predominantly on water supply and irrigation interventions. In the meantime, USAID funded the Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Programme (RAMP) in order to boost the rural economy and support community mobilisation.

In rural areas, within the agriculture and infrastructure sectors, the main Afghan institution representing NGOs and other humanitarian stakeholders was the MRRD. This Ministry has benefited from substantial funds.

Numerous humanitarian projects and programmes launched after 2001 were targeting refugees and IDPs. Water supply and irrigation were (or remain) a hurdle to their settlement, reintegration and economic recovery. In addition, the prevalence of drought over a number of years was a serious concern requiring emergency action.

Excluding one project implemented by the Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment (MIWRE) with the technical assistance from the FAO and funded by bilateral donors, there was no systematic irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation throughout the country during this period.

On a political and institutional level, the transitional Afghan government was paving the way with some important institutional reforms (outlined in chapter 1). This period has seen the emergence and development of multilateral donors, consulting firms, research institutes which have begun to play a central role.

3.1.4 Post 2004: Set up of sector-based development programmes

2004 has been the turning point between relief and development approaches.

Some (European) bilateral donors, the main emergency agencies such as ECHO and UN organisations began to withdraw and/or dramatically reduced their support for Afghanistan and their (traditional) implementing partners, namely NGOs.

In the meantime, most of the multilateral donors and some bilateral donors (Japan, China, Iran, etc.) allocated grants and loans for irrigation rehabilitation and the broader water resources sector as a whole, capacity building and support for institutional changes. In 2004, in order to restructure and develop the water sector, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the EC invested massively in the water sector

The following parts of this chapter will firstly outline some important aspects highlighted previously, such as activities carried out in the irrigation sector by NGOs and UN agencies, in particular the FAO.

This chapter will also address the multi purpose /non focal programmes and their impact and influence on the water sector. The cases of the NSP, the UNWFP and RAMP will be studied in greater detail. Finally a review of the sector-based national programmes launched in 2004 will be carried out.

3.2 NGO roles

During the fieldwork, interviews were conducted with five international NGOs working in the rural development and water sectors (cf. annex 2).

The involvement of NGOs in the irrigation and water sectors can be broken down into three main roles and types of intervention.

3.2.1 Implementing (or Facilitating) Partners within larger interventions or programmes

Prior to 2001, NGO's were mostly in charge of the rehabilitation and construction of canals/karez, via UN-led programmes (FFW or QIP implemented by UNOPS, WFP, FAO or other agencies). This role and position remain the same after 2001 but has reduced gradually up to now.

Nowadays, NGOs still carry out the same kind of role when implementing projects led by the government (such as NSP and PRT launched in 2003). Most often, they are only responsible for programme implementation. Under the new NGO law, the construction/execution part of the (sub) projects will be handed over to the private sector. This has severely reduced the role and work carried out by implementing partners in infrastructure-related programmes. In NSP for instance, NGOs play the role of facilitating partner, intervening upwards in the project design and implementation.

3.2.2 NGO projects

Since the war period, specific fundraising mechanisms, mostly originating from the EU (Europaid and ECHO funds) and a few individual European countries, allowed international NGOs to propose and implement their own projects. Rural projects (rehabilitation and construction) have some characteristics in common. They tend to focus on a specific territory, target an overall vulnerable population within a multi-disciplinary / integrated approach. Combining relief, rehabilitation and development activities was also part of this approach.

Generally speaking, a significant component related to drinking water and irrigation was integrated into these wide scope projects. Interventions in the irrigation sector were concerned predominantly with the basic or physical rehabilitation of canals and karezes, including the construction of intakes and of various water conveyance structures (aqueducts, culverts, etc.).

In addition, small-scale works to improve smaller autonomous karez, spring and water surface systems located nearby villages have been implemented. Lining of canals, and the construction or improvement of pounds or checked dams has also been carried out.

After 2001, pressure and/or high expectations from donors and communities persuaded some NGOs to expand the surface area of irrigated land. The extension of primary canals, creation of surface irrigation schemes, diverting water from rivers, and development of groundwater irrigation with the construction of wells equipped with motor pumps, drainage of wet and barren zones unfit for agriculture have taken place. The overall results and outputs vary according to the programmes and the implementing NGOs. In many cases, the ex-ante evaluations did not sufficiently take into consideration technical specificities and requirements, as well as socio economical and environmental conditions and long-term effects. As mentioned in the water sector policy, it is highly relevant to plan water management at the watershed or river basin level. After the technical implementation has been completed, the project should continue in order to help communities in the overall development process, which is indeed one of the objectives of the newly created state infrastructures (see box below).

**Large development projects by NGO's in the field of Irrigation and Water
Which place for such approach in Afghanistan context?**

The author could discuss with some NGO's in charge of some large (medium sized) projects in relation to irrigation and water in rural areas. Generally these projects which are referred to consist of construction works in irrigation field or/and physical interventions on the hydrological systems. They aim at developing new irrigated land, and better controlling and managing the water resource and its bad effects. These projects lead to in-depth changes in the agro-economical systems and the sociological and environmental aspects of the project sites.

By the following remarks or questions, the relevance of such project in the present Afghan context and the capacities of the implementing agencies and the other involved stakeholders (communities and GoA) are addressed.

Stakeholders' capacities

- Implementing agency

Does it have the necessary capacity and required expertise? If there are some limits there, can the agency acquire these capacity and expertise? Does it have the financial means and institutional commitments to engage the project process in a protracted manner until completion?

- Communities

Although the mobilisation efforts and communication towards them are often done correctly, the communities still vaguely understand their implication in the project, their contribution and the changes that will result from the project. Moreover this kind of project involves most of the time several communities which have not obviously the same interest or which can have a history of uneven relationships...

- Government

The political local authorities (Governor of district and province) are generally properly informed and well involved. The efforts towards the technical authorities, i.e. line ministries, are on the contrary not sufficient in relation to the importance of the project and its sustainability. It must be mentioned also that the representation of these line ministries at the provincial or local levels is weak or inexistent in the case of the MEW (Irrigation Department) for instance. This situation impedes the establishment of the proper level of relation and

involvement. As field actor, the NGO do not pay enough attention to the requirement of the central level.

Such type of project can not be seen in an isolated way. Other stakeholders should be effectively involved at the earliest stage of the project. It is very often the case, but have they been well targeted? Beyond that, are these other stakeholders in capacity to understand and to play the given role? Although the local governance has improved, still often an oligarchic or system or nepotism prevails which can impede the well implementation of the project or an equitable share of its benefits.

Donor's commitment and adaptability of the funding. The donor-imposed funding timeframes are short term, often not exceeding 3 years time, which is not sufficient in the case of such type of project. Is the involved donor enough committed to the project to continue to support the project beyond the first phase?

Project diagnosis: needs and impact assessment and design

The assessment of the project's context and impact in relation to hydrologic/hydraulic and socio economical elements is quite complex especially in the absence of field-born data and information. For the implementing agencies, investing in the preliminary project's phases in the absence of external funds is quite impossible. Finally these agencies should ensure to have or get from outside the proper competences for the assessment and design of the project.

Post project follow-up

The project cycle typically considers the life of a project from the diagnostic to the completion of construction/intervention works by the NGO's and the hand over to the local communities. Some physical works often remain after that, under the communities' responsibilities, such as the construction of the secondary or tertiary canals for the irrigation / drainage networks, as well as its maintenance. Moreover the project will lead to an important redevelopment of the agriculture system in the cover area. There is an obvious need to accompany the communities over this development process that follows the "physical intervention", and to monitor the social and environment unexpected effects. Has it been planned? Does the NGO have the technical and financial resources to do it? Or will it be given to other stakeholders as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water?

Although it is not an evidence, the reluctance of a lot of actors (donors, consulting firms ...) through sector and government new programmes to engage in such type of development approach shows the importance of these issues. Some financial considerations are also in the balance to avoid high expenditures on these costly infrastructures work. Thus most of these programmes limit currently themselves to a so called essential rehabilitation. Some do even fix as a policy not to build intakes on the river as they consider that they can not make proper assessment (with the lack of hydrologic data), and that a bad design can affect the river's hydraulic regime and thus the downstream communities. Other development approach focuses mostly on water management oriented programmes with less risk.

These above words highlight some parameters which are obviously difficult to assess, predict or control. They can affect tremendously the result of the project. Taking them into account in order to make the right decision on whether the NGO should go or not is obviously a difficult exercise. To get strong guaranties from the stakeholders (donor, GoA and communities) and to involve them properly at an earliest stage is the second difficult exercise after the positive decision.

A few NGOs, especially those that have developed a strong technical proficiency, extensive experience and a good understanding of the Afghan context, have also developed some

original and innovative development activities related to a management-oriented approach. Beyond the basic physical rehabilitation, they have attempted to work with the communities for the development of water management and other Natural Resources Management practices and for the introduction/transfer of technologies.

For example, one NGO has developed the following activities:

- Extension services on on-farm water management: Capacity building activities for staff (including staff from MAAHF) were first carried out at ICARDA headquarters followed by extension work in the intervention areas to farmers on relevant topics: levelling, implementation of furrow irrigation systems in orchards, on crop water requirements, and raising awareness on the negative effects of over irrigation;
- Pilot and concrete activities on Natural Resources Management (NRM): water harvesting, soil moisture and conservation, forestry and range management;
- A study tour in India to develop linkages with relevant NGOs and other agencies, and to look at adapted methods of water harvesting and conservation and NRM practices;
- An irrigation canal Water Users Association (WUA) was set up and support was provided in order to address issues on water management, allocation and distribution over areas and irrigation schemes at the community and users' level;
- Collaboration with the department of Water Management of the NWFP Agricultural University of Peshawar.

These activities anticipated forthcoming policy on IWRM which emerged from 2001 onwards and which is based on the identification of essential water management needs related to social and institutional aspects, beyond the issue of irrigation rehabilitation.

Unfortunately these initiatives have not progressed beyond the initial steps and thus their impact has been limited. Insufficient sustainable funding appears to be a factor, as well as the lack of long term views and developed skills from NGO's on such complex activities. Furthermore such type of activity requires a national policy and strategy inexistent up to recently.

Even if this type of initiative has not been sufficiently pursued and developed, the absence of a learning and capitalisation process is regrettable and is a significant omission within programme design and policy-making processes as a whole.

On paper this type of project often adopts an integrated approach, yet this is not fully apparent in the activities carried out in agriculture and water sectors. Agriculture and irrigation rehabilitation activities are, or were, implemented separately. Indeed both on-farm and off-farm water management was significantly less developed despite of the above example of this NGO and its related water activities.

3.2.3 Ad-hoc partner of sector and national programmes

With the shift from humanitarian aid to development after 2001, and the emergence of focal and sector programmes from 2004 onwards, NGOs may have a new and original role to play in the water sector, albeit a more minor one than the one they previously had.

The reasons for these changes lie in the EC and the KRB Programme. The new government-led programmes are controlled by special institutional and organisational arrangements, and implemented by the MEW. The programme may encompass some specific activities, components or subprojects for which the donor and the executing agency may agree on the added value or comparative advantage of the NGO.

Within the overall programme framework, and the (sub) project/component objectives (for which the NGO intervenes), NGOs have retained a high degree of freedom to propose and carry out activities, to adopt their own approach based on their experience and proficiency.

In this type of situation, NGO interventions are fully consistent within the national policy and overall institutional framework. It allows NGOs to act according to their own orientations and decisions. The NGO needs to have a comprehensive understanding of their defined role within the programme and to operate in accordance with the spirit of it, i.e. the River Management Basin concept. The NGO becomes a full partner of these sector government programmes, without losing its identity and the added value of being an NGO. Thus, NGOs and donors have found a link with aid development programmes. Integration as stated for the KRBP does not mean loss of independence and means of operating.

The windows of opportunities within the overall current and forthcoming water sector development activities in which NGOs can work include activities such as ex ante socio-economic appraisal, diagnosis of water management rules and practices, applied research and community mobilisation and (technical and institutional) capacity building.

Out of the five components of the KRBP programme, it was decided to subcontract the two following to NGOs: *Upstream water catchments' protection and forest regeneration* and *social management of water*. The others are related to highly technical and institutional issues, including with engineering, hydraulic and hydrologic modelling, capacity building works for which private consulting firms are absolutely required.

It should be noted that apart from EC and KRBP, none of the few programmes developed specifically by the donors within the water sector currently use NGO services. KRBP is by far the only sector programme that possesses a comprehensive and development-oriented approach. The others have a more narrow scope of intervention based mostly on physical rehabilitation of irrigation schemes limiting the roles and values of NGOs.

3.2.4 Current place or position in the water sector

The role played by NGOs in the past within the water and irrigation sectors and the potential they now represent within the current institutional framework and programming trends is poorly understood. At present, NGOs are for the main part overlooked in this sector.

Within the 30 pages of the *strategic policy framework for the water sector*, the following comments are the sole references to the situation preceding 2001, and in particular to the role played by NGOs and their work during the civil war: "Most projects and programmes have had an emergency and humanitarian character and have therefore failed to effectively respond to the mid term and long term needs of the communities. Lack of specific national policies and strategies has deteriorated the situation and will have lasting consequences on the country. Especially the creation of parallel local institutional structures and so called councils (shuras) under the control of local warlords and power structures have corrupted the traditional community based structures".

The statement in the box below, made in 1996 by an FAO officer, is a more moderate appreciation of NGOs' work in the irrigation sector and gives an insight of the changing role of NGOs and future prospects and options.

From Walter KLEMM, FAO officer in 1996: *“With a few exceptions, NGOs have played an important role in assisting Afghans to survive the impacts of war on social life and in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan’s infrastructure. It is, however, necessary to recognise that NGOs can neither fully takeover the role of social service institutions nor the one of construction companies. Many hydraulic structures rehabilitated or newly constructed during the last years give ample testimony of lacking professionalism in the application of technical know-how and of missing logistical competence in the implementation of construction works. Among the several hundred NGOs operating in Afghanistan, only about a dozen NGOs might have the potential to develop the necessary capacity in order to design and implement hydraulic structures for irrigation purposes. In the future, these NGOs will have to become engineering/construction companies, act as registered professional contractors and eligible for contracting by line Ministries, UN agencies, or the donor community.”*

The poor reputation of the Ministry MEW’s officers and the (new) international stakeholders and consultants is certainly related to the prevailing discourse on NGOs within Kabul and throughout the country as a whole.

Most of these officers and new actors are also persuaded that NGOs no longer have a role to play in this sector. Comments such as “Afghan institutions exist and aid has to go through them...and NGOs are no longer construction contractors” (referring to the 2005 NGO law) were often voiced during interviews

In spite of the IWRM promoted in the policy and strategy frameworks, in reality stakeholders appear to have a rather restricted view of the challenges facing the water and irrigation sectors. Limiting the work to engineering / infrastructure and omitting all the necessary appraisal, management, community mobilization, awareness raising, extension services (soft) aspects show that the programming level is not yet in accordance with the policy level. Most of the new stakeholders are unaware of the role that professional NGOs can play, based on their experiences and know-how.

The complexity of the water sector and the always changing institution environment in the transition time had certainly an effect. At this macro / policy-making level, the efforts made by NGOs to keep up with the rapidly evolving situation and to adapt to the new frameworks and trends were inadequate. The complex nature of the water sector has resulted in much confusion amongst NGOs. Finally, NGOs involved in rural development, especially in the infrastructure sector, have developed strong links with the MRRD at local and regional levels. The link between NGOs and the Afghan authorities/administration in charge of the water sector has never existed. In other sectors, such as agriculture or health, connections between the various stakeholders existed even before 2001 and despite the prevailing institution weaknesses.

However within the water sector as a whole, there is one sub-sector that stands out in comparison, namely the Water Supply and Sanitation sector (which is not covered within this survey). The WatSan sub-sector more or less existed before 2001 thanks to the dynamic efforts of the humanitarian community and their coordination mechanism. The ACBAR committee, the main organ of coordination among NGOs, took the lead of a Water and Sanitation Group (WSG) with UNICEF and a few large NGOs.

This coordination mechanism continued to operate after 2001 within the changing institutional environment. It now functions under the responsibility of MRRD, the ministry of “rural affairs”, which has good relations with the NGO community. Together with their operational work in various parts of the country, some NGOs, such as DACAAR, GAA, Solidarités, ACTED, etc., have continued to play an important role within the (sub-) sector and the WSG.

For example, the Danish NGO, DACAAR, has been very active in the sustainable development and organisation of the WatSan sector beside its primary role of installing community-based drinking water points/systems, sanitation facilities and hygiene education. It developed a national drinking MIS/database system; improved the available hand pump technology, monitored the underground water quality, prepared new guidelines for the sector, conducted capacity building to the private sector and was involved in lectures at the Kabul University.

Prior to 2001, such coordination arrangements did not exist specifically in the irrigation sub-sector. It was assumed that the Agriculture Technical Group was responsible for coordination efforts. The IWRM and NRM were new concepts at institution level (even if some initiatives were taken by NGOs prior to that), and from 2001 onwards the MIWRE (changed to MEW) was responsible for the sector.

Finally, another reason might be the fairly insignificant presence and weak overall proficiency and experience of NGOs in irrigation and (integrated) water management issues. NGOs active in Afghanistan have gained experiences and skills in developing/constructing drinking water facilities and small-scale irrigation systems (using groundwater water), but less in the rehabilitation and management of surface water gravity fed systems.

3.3 FAO and other UN agencies

FAO is by far the most experienced stakeholder, due to its longstanding presence in Afghanistan and involvement in the water sector, mostly in the irrigation sub-sector. The FAO has been involved in a number of irrigation programmes since 1989 but has also carried out baseline surveys, and other research and appraisal works. Additionally, the FAO has shown itself capable of evolving alongside the changing context in Afghanistan since 1989 and is thus a key player in bridging the gap between past and present activities, and maintaining institutional memory.

- 1989 – 2001: Irrigation schemes rehabilitation projects through some NGOs as IP, mostly in the eastern provinces, supervised from Peshawar.
- 1996: FAO has carried out a complete study of the agriculture sector including water resources and irrigation issues. Strategies and methodologies for rehabilitation and upgrading irrigation schemes and the sector as a whole were expressed for the first time through a National Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme (NIRP). FAO recommended that the main stakeholders abandon the QIP implementation approach to launch a NIRP.
- 2002: Implementation of a Water Resources and Irrigation (WRI) unit with the creation of a library of available written information resources.
- 2003: FAO, with the participation of some NGOs, undertook a country-wide irrigation rehabilitation needs assessment survey collecting basic information and data of almost all the irrigation schemes. This inventory supported the decision-making process of donors like the World Bank in the preparation of their development plans.
- 2003-04: During transition time, FAO executed with the MEW a “Community-Based Irrigation Infrastructure Rehabilitation Programme” in three regions (and thirteen provinces), i.e. Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat (funds from the Dutch, German and Italian governments (for a total of US\$4.2 million)). In the meantime, FAO implemented a “bridging project” in preparation of the Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Project (EIRP by WB) and other sector programmes to come. The purpose of the “bridging project” was to provide capacity building for MEW and ID central and provincial staff.
- 2004: FAO is selected to execute the World Bank-funded triennial EIRP programme (cf. 3.5).
- Autumn 2005: FAO is developing its western (Herat) irrigation rehabilitation project area within an IRBM approach.

Within the MAAHF, there is a distinct lack of linkage between agriculture and irrigation related activities. FAO internal units and programmes also appear to suffer from a lack of coordination and exchange. The FAO could help fill this persisting institutional gap between the two sectors and the two government institutions, i.e. MAAHF and the Ministry in charge of water and irrigation.

Given its substantial experience and proximity to water and irrigation issues within Afghanistan, it is surprising that FAO participation in institution reforms and policy development since 2001 remains minimal. FAO has apparently preferred to remain on the operational side.

3.3.1 Other UN agencies

Before and after 2001, almost all UN agencies were carrying out activities related to the water sector. Coordination among the UN family was weak, or almost non-existent, and the same applies for the NGO community. Apart from the FAO, UNICEF (within the Water Supply and Sanitation) and UNEP (in Environment), UN agency technical expertise in the water sector was weak. They are, or were, active in this sector indirectly within the frame of their mandate, i.e. assistance to refugees (UNHCR), food security (WFP), etc.

The case of WFP and its Food For Work activities related to water/irrigation sector is studied in paragraph 3.4.

3.4 Multi purpose or non focal programmes

The one feature shared by the programmes described below is that water management improvement and irrigation rehabilitation are mixed or combined with a number of other activities and objectives. Often within these programmes, the physical outputs or the creation of infrastructures or assets come in second position against a primary more general or even complementary objective like improving governance, food aid, rural economy, returnees’ reintegration, etc. In contrast to the sector programmes described in paragraph 3.5, these programmes possess a technical and sector-specific focus and approach.

Nonetheless, water and irrigation issues and activities appear largely within their interventions in favour of the rural population. Therefore, their influence and impact on the water sector is large.

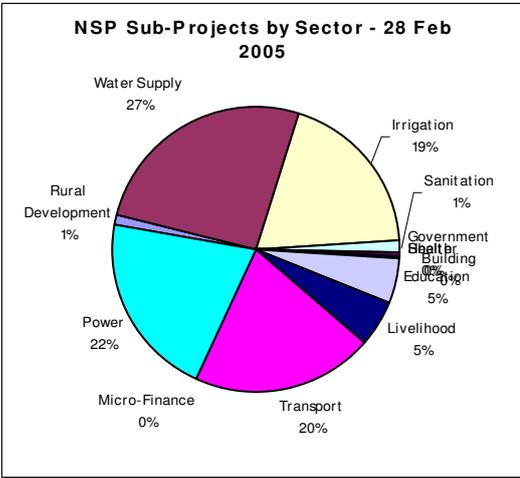
The NSP, WFP/FFW (Food For Work) and RAMP programmes are studied in greater detail below.

NSP (National Solidarity Programme)

The nationwide World Bank/ARTF funded NSP includes irrigation rehabilitation and improvement, as well as water supply among the small-scale works undertaken within the programme. These activities are often identified and requested in priority by the rural communities through the special community-based institution mechanisms developed by the programme.

The level of intervention is the village entity. The programme is run by both MRRD and GTZ as an Oversight Consultant (OC).

The key development issues addressed by the project are rural reconstruction and strengthening



of local governance. The OC officer interviewed stressed however, the “governance” nature of the programme, in opposition to an infrastructure programme. The implementers maintain that the objective is the creation and development of Community Development Councils (CDC), while the physical output, whatever its nature, is less important.

The funds made available by the programme for the creation of the assets requested by the community are fairly substantial and some interesting physical outputs have emerged as a result. The NSP programme allocates US\$200 per family while the EIRP programme (cf. 3.5), funded also by the WB, has established a limit of US\$250 per ha of irrigated land.

Coordination between NSP/MRRD and the line/technical ministries exists in principle in order to ensure that the activities under the NSP are coherent with the overall policy in place and the existing planning. Nevertheless, discussions with the Irrigation Department (MEW) in Herat and Jalalabad revealed no such effective link for the water sector

Some NGOs interviewed about their involvement as Facilitating Partner regret the absence of responsibility regarding technical issues in the NSP. The community-driven demand has to be accepted by all, even if it shows obvious lack of coherence and relevance for sustainable village (or surrounding area) development. A strict bottom up or demand driven approach with no (constructive or counter balancing) opposition apparently has its limitations.

Management of water and of other natural resources (pastures, forests, etc.) does not fit in with the strict village administrative entity chosen by NSP. Many reports and officers emphasise this issue of not taking natural areas and borders into consideration when dealing with NRM activities in NSP or other programmes. The Manteqa geographical entity, above the village level, seems to be more relevant as Favre (FAO) points out³.

Considering the construction of an irrigation infrastructure for a village without looking at the whole system in a holistic way makes little sense. Building permanent irrigation structures at village level while ignoring the wider dimensions of water distribution may entrench inequalities. Finally it is counterproductive for community awareness campaigns and mobilisation process that are highlighted in the integrated water management approach developed in the water sector by the MEW.

Fields observations from MEW and ID officers, and other consultants external to NSP, indicate that the design and construction of irrigation structures built by private local construction companies and by the communities within the framework of the programme are of a poor standard.

No real linkage and interaction has been made with other development (sector based) programmes, such as the Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation programme (EIRP; cf. 3.5), and other nationwide programmes funded by the World Bank. There are a number of schemes where the proposed work exceeds NSP funding limits and technical capacities. In this type of situation it would have made sense for the EIRP to take over.

³ Raphy Favre - “interface between state and society – an approach for Afghanistan”; discussion paper January 2005 : “The manteqa means area or region is a group of settlements/hamlets of heterogeneous size that are commonly identified by its inhabitants or the other communities, under a single name. The manteqa also refers to the smaller unit where agriculture production is organized. The irrigation systems by creating reciprocity links amongst users are the most standard and frequently recurring variable among the various criteria use to define a manteqa... The “manteqa” level for grass-root organization seems appropriate as it reflects the underlying social structure of rural Afghanistan, but other considerations such as watershed units may also be important as sustainable management of natural resources is essential to livelihood and sound economic development.”

The NSP and some FPs are aware of these aforementioned structural problems or bottlenecks, and try to tackle them locally and practically. Some technical and transversal issues are now the object of discussion between FPs and other stakeholders within committees and workshops in order to improve the quality of the achievements. A technical manual for the water sector is being drafted and will be submitted and approved by MEW. The NSP is thinking to extend the definition of projects to include inter-village projects and institutions. AKDN, an FP acting in central Afghanistan, has created village clusters. It means that the needs of individual communities can be addressed within a broader area in an integrated development scheme. Their activities cover infrastructure, natural resources, management, gender, health and education solutions, etc. The SCA complements these activities by bringing together CDCs with common interests. The NSP itself has developed recently some links with line ministries like the MEW.

However, to what extent can a programme like NSP, large-scale and tailored for quick realisation and satisfaction of the population and authorities, be flexible and facilitate such practices? Can technical components, such as water management and quality approach, also be integrated? Some structural constraints related to the design and set-up of the programme, such as time, money, qualified human resources and partners, might hamper such objectives as well as to the flexibility and quality of the programmes.

3.4.1 World Food Programme / FFW

In the case of WFP, the core objective as stated in the agency mandate is to improve food security.

The Afghanistan mid-term external evaluation of the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO 10233 / April 2003 – April 2005) has served predominantly to understand the nature and the quality of the WFP involvement in the water sector. A large proportion of the Food (or Cash) For Work (FFW) activities within the WFP overall interventions focus on water related issues. Delivery of food or cash to the beneficiaries is the primary goal while the creation of assets, mostly infrastructure, with the beneficiaries as work force, is secondary to this. NGOs are the implementing partners.

It is worth noting that WFP also operates in rural areas through the MRRD.

The most popular activity under FFW has been irrigation rehabilitation, which accounted for 30% of sub-projects, followed by road rehabilitation (25%), school construction (8%), water supply/sanitation (7%) and tree planting (7%).

Table 1: Assets Created - Physical Outputs – WFP / FFW

Description	Unit	2002	2003	2004	Total
I. Rural Road Construction					
Roads Constructed/Rehabilitated					
Bridges built					
Culverts Constructed					
Side Ditches Cleaned					
II. Agriculture Related Outputs					
Canals Restored/rehabilitated	Km	5,769	433	3919	10,121
Karezes* Rehabilitated	Unit	2,121	859	1494	4,474
Spring De-silted Drainages	Km	151	48	81	280
Rehabilitated	Km	80	36	46	162
Water Reservoirs Restored	Unit	345	40	265	650
Aqua-ducts/Flumes Constructed	Unit	-	-	10	
Agricultural land reclaimed	Ha	-	-	252	

Source: WFP annual reports

These figures show the real influence and impact of the FFW on the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes.

Beyond this quantitative aspect, it is important to look at the quality of the FFW interventions, especially those related to irrigation.

The mid-term external evaluation emphasised the clear tradeoffs between the FFW's relief function and the asset creation function, and the difficulty in reconciling the two in the same sub-project.

“As a means of creating physical assets, its weaknesses have been a generally weak connection with livelihood recovery, poor quality/durability of works, and lack of attention to equity issues, especially for irrigation rehabilitation...If the priority is to protect and recover livelihood assets, more attention should be given to ensuring that the assets benefit the poor, are good quality and properly maintained.”

Generally speaking, the IPs have limited technical expertise in engineering and insufficient resources for non-food inputs. The work is mostly limited to basic labour work with shovels, pickles and wheelbarrows as tools, apart from some International NGOs that have received additional funds (ECHO). Quality and sustainability of road and canal rehabilitation in the “food-for-asset-creation” projects thus appeared to be particularly poor.

The evaluation report concludes on that: *“Technical quality of works should be enhanced by linking with competent implementing partners and by hiring in supervision from departments of agriculture, irrigation and forestry as necessary...Sustainability of assets should be enhanced by building community-level commitment and maintenance capacity, either through NGO implementing partners or through MRRD's support to elected Community Development Committees.”*

Sustainability wise, the government through the MRRD has shown its opposition to using FFW for routine (annual) maintenance of irrigation canals because it tends to weaken collective self-help mechanisms. Apparently WFP Afghanistan no longer funds canal cleaning projects and has reduced its involvement in the irrigation sector.

3.4.2 Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Programme (RAMP)

The RAMP (July 2003 – June 2006; US\$250 million) aims to rehabilitate and develop rural economy infrastructure and other assets within a few selected areas in Afghanistan by targeting some essential sectors including:

- Irrigation systems
- Market infrastructure
- Livestock
- Market opportunities and rural financial services

While the case of the NSP and WFP/FFW analysed above were multi-purpose programmes, the RAMP is a multi-sector programme with a unique overall development objective. The RAMP approach is quite specific compared with the other programmes in rural areas. The rationale is to develop synergy and enable combined efforts to have a more significant impact across targeted value chains.

The RAMP relies on a network of IPs which is selected on the basis of their management and technical assets and comparative advantages. They are mostly NGOs, but also research institutes (ICARDA) and consulting firms (DAI).

The following five priority regions were selected for its implementation: Nangahar; Kandahar/Helmand; Kunduz / Baghlan; Parwan/ Kapisa; and Herat.

The infrastructure rehabilitation work of the RAMP programme covers “repairs and improvements of several major canals and drains, expanded use of drip irrigation, and improvements of critical farm-to-market roads”.

The quantitative objective for the ‘irrigation systems’ component is high, i.e. 310,000ha of irrigated land to be rehabilitated or improved. Rehabilitation appears to be limited to the desiltation of canals and the construction/reparation of hydraulic structures.

USAID is mostly involved in the irrigation sector in the Helmund basin (darweshan and Shamalan canal commands of the middle Helmand area), as well as in Nangahar province.

Development Alternatives Inc (DAI), the most experienced IP in the irrigation sector, has been working for several months on the development of water users’ associations. In this regard, a WUA charter has been drafted in order to institutionalise this initiative.

3.4.3 Other programmes

It should be noted that the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) programme run by the coalition also implements a variety of activities related to the water sector. However, it was not possible to gather further information on this relatively opaque programme. Neither was it possible to study the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP) from the ART Fund although it may also run some activities in the water sector.

3.4.4 Analysis and conclusions

The overview of the NSP and WFP/FFW programmes presented in this study, as well as comments on other programmes, highlight a few general issues and problems. These are summarised below:

- Lack of technical expertise, human and financial resources and commitment from the donors and implementers to correctly design and carry out physical works or infrastructure relevant to these programmes.
- Lack of proper and specific monitoring and evaluation processes in order to assess the quality of the project on the 'asset creation' (secondary) aspect. The evaluation of WFP interventions points out that: "If the 'asset creation' outcome is to have meaning, then this aspect must be monitored with a similar degree of rigour as the delivery of food."
- Limitations of a full bottom-up or community-driven demand approach within rural societies facing severe social disturbances, conflicting interests and lack of awareness on issues like equitable water allocation, sustainable water resources management.
- Counter productive discrepancy and competition within the sector programmes. The lack or absence of liaison and coordination between these two groups of programmes may create overlaps even if they are funded by the same donor. Moreover the various conditions and criteria for the selection of the irrigation schemes and the implementation of the activities may affect the communities' attitude towards this assistance. The beneficiaries may play around this absence of coordination and common intervention principles.
- No wider consideration on long-term issues like sustainability, integrated water management, post project (social and environmental) effects than the mere accomplishment of the physical work.
- Lack or absence from the MRRD of coordination and technical cooperation with the line ministries in the water sector, mostly the MEW. Since 2001, the MRRD is the main government interlocutor or even partner of the NGOs and the humanitarian stakeholders, playing a central role in the implementation and/or coordination of these multi-purpose programmes.
- Lack of consistency and relevance within the sectors' policy and strategies, which are not taken into consideration correctly or are sometimes completely overlooked by this type of programme.

The above comments concern mostly the NSP and WFP programmes. They do not apply all to the RAMP. This USAID-funded programme has its own particular approach, somewhere between the sector and multi purpose approaches which have been compared in this study.

Within such a large and rigid programme, it is indeed difficult to manage two different or opposite goals as governance/infrastructure for the NSP or relief/rehabilitation-development for WFP. One goal or objective becomes 'automatically' secondary, resulting in limited allocation of time, and financial and human resources. The integration of dual levels or angles of intervention may be feasible for individual projects led by NGOs in a given area, like a district or a watershed.

3.5 Sector based national development programmes

The institutional and policy reforms that have been prepared and implemented since 2002 in the irrigation and water sectors have led to the definition of an institutional framework and the formulation of strategies. This was necessary in order to streamline the development processes.

Since 2004, some programmes by sector have emerged. There are currently several projects and agencies working in the irrigation sector. Three programmes with major irrigation components are described in a more detailed way below:

- Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Project (EIRP), by the World Bank
- Emergency Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project (EIRRP), funded by the Asian Development Bank
- Kunduz River Basin Programme (KBRP), by the European Commission

3.5.1 Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Project (EIRP)

EIRP (US\$75 million; April 2004 – March 2007) is the first World Bank project designed with a specific focus on the agricultural sector.

EIRP provides priority investments to rehabilitate the existing dilapidated irrigation system and the hydro-meteorological network, using the river basin management approach. The project consists of four components. These are: (i) rehabilitation of irrigation schemes; (ii) rehabilitation of hydro-meteorological network; (iii) preparation of feasibility studies and monitoring; and, (iv) institutional development.

The objective of the first component (US\$50 million) is to rehabilitate 280 000ha of irrigated land⁴ by means of three categories of sub-projects, depending on the size of the schemes⁵. Canal irrigation, as well as karezes and springs are targeted. The rehabilitation work consists primarily of engineering. As its title indicates, this programme consists of emergency, physical and partial ('essential') rehabilitation. For example, the rehabilitation of canal irrigation is limited to a physical intervention in the main canal by the rehabilitation or construction of conveyance hydraulic structures.

The reconstruction of the hydro-meteorological network undoubtedly serves a long-term development objective and the IRBM based institutional setup. The FAO is assisting the MEW in the implementation of the programme. It should be noted that FAO former works and recommendations on the irrigation sector have significantly inspired the EIRP.

It is at present the largest, and the only nationwide programme within the water sector.

3.5.2 Emergency Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project (EIRRP)

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is funding the Traditional Irrigation Component (TIC) of a more global Emergency Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project (EIRRP). The objective is to support the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure and develop the capacity of MEW. The project started in July 2004 (completion in December 2006) with funding of US\$15 million for the Traditional Irrigation Component and with the MEW as the implementing agency. The main services are being carried out by a Japanese consultancy firm (PCI Asia). The project implementation area is defined as the basins of the rivers Khulm, Balkh, Ab-e-Safid and Shirin Tagab. The project staff is based in Mazar-e-Sharif and their work focus on the Balkh River and Jawzjan irrigation systems.

As its title indicates, EIRP is very similar to the WB funded EIRP (first component).

In addition, ADB is funding another project in the same area, namely the Balkh River Integrated Water Resources Management Project (BRIWRMP), with the IRBM approach and the KRBP experience.

Finally ADB intends to adopt an even more comprehensive and integrated approach for water and agriculture activities in the western basins in lower and middle Hari Rud Basin around Herat. Funds of US\$2 million have been granted to rehabilitate, modernise and develop new infrastructures and water resources infrastructure, lay the foundations for improved agricultural productivity and ensure the integrity of watershed resources. This project is currently at the feasibility stage.

⁴ 50 % of the 2, 6 millions ha of the Afghanistan's total irrigation schemes (equal to 1, 3 millions ha) require rehabilitation according to a FAO estimation.

⁵ 1) small scale schemes (\approx 100 ha) : 110,000 ha; 2) medium scale schemes (\approx 750 Ha): 120,000 ha; 3) Big schemes (\approx 2500 ha): 50,000 ha

3.5.3 Kunduz River Basin Programme (KBRP)

The Kunduz River Basin Programme (KBRP) is funded by the European Commission and implemented by the Afghanistan government. A budget of €12.5 million has been allocated for the project for a duration of five years starting in June 2004 (→ 2008).

The KBRP is operating in the Kunduz River Basin (Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar provinces and sub-basins), which were identified in consultation with MEW and are known as the Afghanistan's 'bread basket'. At field-level, the programme will involve the local communities and will be administered by the provincial offices and local government. The programme is essentially hosted by the MEW with support from both the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAFAH) and the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD).

The project includes:

- Component 1: Preparation of a river basin water management plan and set-up of the RBA (River Basin Authority);
- Component 2: Improvement of infrastructure and water management in 10 to 15 small to medium irrigation schemes;
- Component 3: Improving operational efficiency of water use from irrigation schemes;
- Component 4: Development of capacity of 3 MEW provincial offices and river basins councils including WUA;
- Component 5: Regeneration of selected upper catchments.

KBRP aims at (i) assisting the rural farming communities with the improvement of the irrigation schemes; (ii) implementing the new institution and policy framework on one river basin and learning lesson for further extension of the IRBM approach; (iii) developing and testing technical and social solutions for an efficient, equitable and sustainable management of the water (and other natural) resource.

3.5.4 Other projects

- The **German government through GTZ** is active in the water sector, mostly providing support for institutional development within the sector as a whole. GTZ is assisting the MEW in the necessary reforms.
- On an operational level, GTZ is soon to commence some watershed management pilot projects in Shaki Wardak district (Wardak province), as well as in Paktia province. It is possible that sub-basin councils will be created with GTZ as facilitator, and some pilot activities related to the water management and NRM will also be undertaken. On a smaller watershed scale than the KBRP, GTZ aims through these pilot projects to adapt and develop the integrated water resources management approach within the Afghan context.
- The Chinese government is rehabilitating the Parwan irrigation system while the Indian government is considering the future expansion and construction of the Salman Dam, which is in the Hari Rud river basin. The Iranian Government is carrying out research work on the Kabul Basin. Through JICA, the Japanese government is investing in the rehabilitation of the modern irrigation scheme (Tarmac canal) in the Helmand region.

3.5.5 Analysis and conclusions

The above programmes share some common features, which are also characteristic of sector development aid mechanisms to a certain extent.

1. Programme organisational and management setup

The main executor of these programmes is the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW) and its provincial structures. The MEW has Irrigation Departments in all provinces, many of which are significantly underdeveloped.

The MEW receives *technical assistance* from the FAO within the EIRP and from private international consulting firms for other cases. Beyond this technical assistance, the organisations contracted by the donor are accountable for the execution of these programmes. Nevertheless, a close and well-defined collaboration exists between the executing or implementing agencies and the Ministry, both at the central and provincial levels. However, weaknesses within MEW departments and insufficient staff is having a negative impact on cooperation efforts and is slowing down the implementation process. Despite the constraints it could represent, it is absolutely necessary to work through the Afghan Ministries. Capacity building efforts and actions are included in these sector programmes (cf. paragraph 4 below).

Organisational and management arrangements and procedures, not described in this report, are specific for each programme.

2. Relevance and consistency with the water sector national policy framework

These programmes have been designed according to the new institution and policy framework. The programmes even aim at adapting, disseminating and implementing these policies, laws and regulations, while at the same time assisting the rural communities.

3. Common understanding on interventions principles

Many of the above stakeholders working with the MEW informally follow common principles regarding their intervention towards the assisted populations and areas, based on technical, social or environmental considerations. For example, the decision not to construct (irrigation scheme) intake structures or undertake basic maintenance work as cleaning of canals or karezes; or the decision to adopt a demand-driven approach (for irrigation schemes rehabilitation) and encourage community contribution.

4. Capacity building component in each programme

Beside the day-to-day participation of the MEW employees in the implementation of these programmes, specific capacity building activities are integrated in each programme. They include mainly trainings for civil servants and rehabilitation and organisation of the MEW and ID infrastructures.

5. Coordination and control from the main government institution in charge of the water sector (MEW)

It is a major challenge to avoid overlaps and duplicated efforts through management and coordination of the different activities in the water and irrigation sectors. MEW holds monthly donors' coordination meetings and twice a month implementers' coordination meetings in order to improve the coordination between donors and implementers in the irrigation sector. Despite these efforts, coordination is not satisfactory according to most of the people met during the study. The main stakeholders involved in sector-based programmes in collaboration with the MEW do collaborate more efficiently. They share offices at the MEW in Kabul, which is undoubtedly an advantage.

6. Professional approach and capacities

Even though during this study no assessment of the technical approaches and options selected by these various stakeholders and programmes, was conducted, it seems that the tasks and interventions were mostly achieved with a high level of proficiency and responsibility.

The same stakeholders and their related programmes differ from each other on the following aspects:

- Methodologies and strategies of intervention in this water sector vary significantly or highly amongst the various stakeholders and programmes described above. There are obvious differences between the emergency rehabilitation, nationwide approach selected

by the World Bank which focuses mainly on irrigation schemes; and the more comprehensive, geographically focused and development oriented approach.

- The executing agencies in charge of the programmes can subcontract some of the programme activities, such as surveys or construction work to specialised entities like private Afghan companies, individual consultants and NGOs. Construction tasks are now restricted to the private sector (especially since the 2005 NGO law). Except for the KRBP, the other programmes and stakeholders do not use NGO services, as illustrated in section 3.2.

4 CONCLUSION

The sector policy and institutional reforms

In 2002, the policy and strategy development process in the water sector was launched, led by the international community, i.e. multilateral and bilateral donors. The German government through GTZ has been in charge of assisting the Afghan Government, and the relevant Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), designated as the core institution to manage the water resources. Drawing up new policies and strategies, and implementing the required institutional reforms has been a long and difficult process and one that is not yet complete, four years after its commencement.

Generally, consensus appears to have been reached regarding these reforms and new policy. Yet it is not yet clear whether all the relevant stakeholders have shown an interest in the exercise and the conclusions. It should be noted here that the involvement of the pre-2001 key humanitarian actors, i.e. the UN and the NGOs, was almost nil in the reform process. NGOs were not invited to participate in the debate and furthermore they have not shown a great deal of interest. The participation of UN agencies in institutional reform was less effective than expected knowing their experience. This is particularly true for the FAO.

According to the author, drafted policies and institution reforms are a poor reflection of the current reality in the water sector in Afghanistan compared with the worldwide aid development concept on Integrated Water Resources (River Basin) Management. Additionally, reference and analysis of past interventions at institutional and operational levels are significantly lower. Except for often quick and simplistic appraisals, a global evaluation of the successes and failures of humanitarian action (before 2001) within the water sector has not yet been carried out. At the time of the study, the NGO community was officially invited by the Afghan Government to participate in the drafting process of the National Development Strategy (NDS) (following the NDF in 2002). They have been asked to put together a list of lessons learned from their projects in order to inform policy-makers in various sectors. This may show some changes in the understanding of NGO roles in the transfer of experience and knowledge.

The MEW, a young institution, faces a significant number of challenges, as outlined in this report. Its progressive empowerment is essential in order to have a leading institution within the water sector. Efficient coordination and collaboration will depend upon a strong leadership. The water sector is too complex and vast to be kept in the hands of one institution. The functions and responsibilities on water should be shared. Collaboration between the MEW, MRRD and MAAHF - the three main government institutions involved in rural areas in the field of water and natural resources - both at the central and decentralised levels, is crucial for a better management and development of the water resources, mostly in the agriculture field.

Consolidating and implementing the IWRM concept in the current Afghanistan reality is a tremendous challenge for all the stakeholders involved. Drawing up the policy framework may have been the easiest part of the job.

Sector strategies and plans

Common strategy, planning and programming at the MEW level is still absent.

Important steps have yet to be accomplished within the policy development process and institutional reforms, in particular drafting the regulations, strategies and plans of actions for each sub-sector in accordance with the global sector policy. The task is not easy as the

important and immediate needs and expectations of the population, especially the water users, need to be taken into consideration. These more concrete and operational elements and documents should form the base for the preparation of plans and programmes by donors and other stakeholders.

Evolution of the aid interventions since 2001

The present study on the water sector reveals the following points but they are also common to the aid system as a whole in Afghanistan.

After 2001, the humanitarian intervention scheme with individual and micro projects and NGOs as main aid stakeholders has continued to function as before. Funding mechanisms remain the same but the amount of available funds has considerably increased. An emergency situation is still prevailing mostly due to a series of severe droughts and the needs of refugees and IDPs returning home.

The transition to new aid (development) stakeholders and to government-led programmes was also necessary. Establishing institutional foundations, i.e. policy making, planning and programming and setting up the new Afghan institutions, has taken time and this has delayed the emergence of structural and sector-based programmes.

In 2003, the emergence of government led programmes, such as the NSP, marked the initial change. These programmes consist of multi-purpose (non focal and sector-based), rehabilitation-oriented, nationwide or macro interventions. Their 'institutional' aim is to facilitate the transition towards emerging forms of sector, development and government-led aid. Most of the NGOs have followed such programmes, thus responding positively to the NDF statement in 2002: "They (humanitarian agencies) tend to become focused on isolated and fragmented programmes rather than collectively address the whole picture from a programmatic and long-term development angle." It is also true that their own (external and traditional) sources of funding began to decline at the same time.

The year 2004 represented a turning point. The shift from humanitarian assistance to development aid was most apparent at this time. Donors and the Afghan Government (and its relevant ministries) launched the first (set of) large sector programmes, as described for the water sector in this study. Simultaneously, direct funding to NGOs has reduced drastically.

It will be interesting to see how the current opposition between the non-focal and multi-purpose programmes and sector programmes outlined in this report will evolve. The former which are currently involving numerous NGOs might see their influence reduced in the water sector over the coming years. Their strategies are more appropriate for transition periods and they might be fully replaced by sector programmes.

Donors' current planning, programming and coordination issues

Donors started planning and programming effectively from 2004 onwards when the overall institutional development process reached a significant stage.

Within this sector, the planning and programming process has been carried out individually by each donor, with limited dialogue among the donor community and Afghan institutions. For each donor, the decision on planning and programming is often unilateral, based on their strategies and understanding of needs, priorities and policies. The attitude adopted by donors (and other stakeholders) towards the new policies and institutions are highly variable. The KRBP, funded by the EC, has opted for a development approach with the implementation of the IRBM concept in accordance with the policy framework. Other donors

engaged in the water sector and at the MEW have chosen a more pragmatic, quantitative and transitory rehabilitation approach. They do also engage in activities or components that take into consideration sector policy and longer-term issues. Finally some other donors and stakeholders with little or no linkage with the MEW choose to overlook the new policy and adhere to their own strategies.

Stakeholders and projects/programmes that are not officially related to the MEW and the water sector as a whole is certainly an issue. As illustrated in this report, their influence or impact in the water sector is by no means negligible and this leads to obvious problems.

Generally speaking, coordination remains weak according to the people met in spite of the presence of a central body in the water sector i.e. the MEW. The transversal management and control is missing. Some persons met are advising to have one steering committee for all the programmes under the control of the MEW and a common M&E system. A stronger presence and weight of the MEW at both central and local levels are required with this respect. It requires also that the numerous protagonists liaise and report to the MEW with a proper system in place for that. More generally it is the responsibility of the numerous and various non governmental stakeholders to engage themselves clearly and fully within the newly established institution environment and sector policy.

This new phase has highlighted discrepancies among the numerous and various involved government institutions and international stakeholders. Having a sector based policy does not mean that there will be a common or coordinated approach when developing plans and programmes. For example, USAID and its partners do not agree with the slowness and some “unrealistic” and “un-pragmatic” options or decisions on policy making, planning and programming process from the MEW and the other donors. USAID through RAMP and DAI has been working for several months, with limited relations with other stakeholders, on a WUA charter (based on their experience in Helmand) and on a water management strategy and action plan.

For the above given reasons, the programmes and actions in the water sector have remained up to now isolated and disparate.

Place and role for the NGO

The few NGO encountered during the survey emphasised that it has become very difficult to mobilise funds for their own projects. Most of them had thus to adapt rapidly to the new institutional environment and get involved in new and unusual roles and tasks. Therefore many NGOs are nowadays confined to the role of facilitating or implementing partners. Today they highly rely on programmes like NSP to be able to stay in Afghanistan.

Since 2001, the water sector has been organised and developed at the institution level and especially at the MEW without considering a possible role for the NGOs as a “real” partner. Water is considered as a “technical” sector to be given to the private sector and to some specialised (international) organisations and consulting firms.

The institutional changes have reduced drastically the scope of intervention of the NGO's. Very few of the current governmental and non-governmental stakeholders believe on a concrete and positive role for the NGOs except the KRB Program funded by the EC.

It shows concretely that within the new institution set up and aid development trend NGOs have useful assets and comparative advantages for the development of water related programmes such as their field based and long experience of the context and their proximity with the rural communities ... Unlike the KRBP, the other current programmes by sector are very much oriented towards engineering and infrastructures construction where NGOs do not

have a real added value. Any how, the 2005 new law is prohibiting NGOs from doing construction work. The programme trends might evolve in the coming years into a more comprehensive approach following the KRBP pilot experience and the IRBM based water policy. NGOs' role might thus be boosted again.

Regarding the possible evolvement of the NGO's place and role in Afghanistan, the various options identified by this study are:

→ **Integration within the large or national wide sector emerging programmes** with the NGO's positioning clearly their services in well-identified opportunities - sub-sectors or activities - where they have some comparative advantages over the other stakeholders (private construction sector, UN agencies, consulting firms...).

They could act for:

- Advocacy and awareness raising / education campaigns
- Local communities mobilisation and capacity building; community or local institutions strengthening
- Extension and applied research work
- Monitoring & Evaluation

Which requisites?

- Appraisal of their area and technical experience within an internal learning and capitalisation process which can be transferred later on;
- Clear and strong institutional positioning in relation to the new development aid framework set up for the country; it requires better communication and a presence at Kabul level.
- Linkages and partnerships with national and international research and specialised institutions to develop comprehensive and collective proficiency required for the development approach;
- Strengthen their own technical and social competences within an internal process of specialisation;

→ **Continuation on the multi purpose programmes like NSP and NEEP.** It is currently the major way of fund raising and acting for NGO's but will it remain so...? What is the future of this kind of aid after the first set of programmes that will end up around 2007? Will it be changed to full sector approach?

→ **Continuation on the water supply and sanitation sub-sector:** Up to now this sub-sector has remained aside the important changes that took place at the MEW and within the water sector (in the fields of water management and irrigation). Institution wise, it is still controlled by MRRD, a familiar government institution for the NGO. NGOs remain important actors in this (sub) sector, well integrated in the institutional aspects and well dedicated to the transfer of the engineering and construction part to private companies. How will it evolve? Will it be integrated in the overall planning and programming works of the sector, as the IWRM concept intends to do...? Will the private sector take over fully?

→ **Positioning on some pockets of sector/technical needs and geographical areas** not covered by the national wide and government led programmes; Will there be proper funding mechanism for that...?

The irrigation sub –sector case

Irrigation was not specifically addressed in this report. It has however a great importance for the country. 85 % of crops are grown in Afghanistan under an irrigation system and agriculture represents by far the main economic activity.

Walter Klemm from FAO was stating in 1996 the following: “The rather modest amount of capital made available since 1989 for the irrigation sector does not at all reflect the importance of the crucial impact of rehabilitated irrigation infrastructure on agricultural production”. Such comment was heard during the study and looks still valid in 2005 in spite of a positive change in the country allowing investment in the water and irrigation sector. The funding efforts by the donors are not yet in accordance with the tremendous needs in the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes and the development of water resources (and agriculture).

The gap existing between the irrigation and the agriculture sectors remains important. No effort within the reforms process has been made to fill it, in spite of a more constructive institutional environment. The linkage between the MEW and MAAHF is still crucially missing. Operationally wise, reference is made to agriculture and food production as the general objective for the irrigation programmes. However, irrigation and agriculture domains are seen as different, and addressed separately. Rehabilitation or intervention on irrigation schemes are regarded on the water supply side and from upstream (top) to downstream (down). Most of the stakeholders consider (at this stage) the irrigation schemes as physical networks, from a hydraulic angle, omitting many other levels like the agricultural, sociological and hydrological levels.

The discourse within the water sector about the right methodology for irrigation rehabilitation/development is interesting and creates significant discrepancies within the specialists and institutions dealing with irrigation...The numerous stakeholders have developed their own arguments on this topic. Water management versus infrastructure? Rehabilitation (transitory) approach versus (immediate or direct) strategy development? A minimum or essential physical/hard rehabilitation claimed by the World Bank and its EIRP? Or a modernisation process with important infrastructures and management related inputs and improvements chosen by the EC? Or an intermediary approach with complete rehabilitation work as likely suggested by another stakeholder? Are these approaches opposite or complementary? We can imagine by itself the pros and cons of each approach or choice.

On one hand, the farmers' expectations and needs should be considered in terms of rapid and efficient food security and overall economic recovery. On the other, steps and actions should be undertaken at the same time within a long term and development considerations of the water resources. How to reconcile that? How to proceed? With successive phases? or by dividing the work into programmes or between the stakeholders...? The issue is quite complex and would need more consultation, coordination and collaboration between stakeholders. This discussion should be based on better (and a common) understanding and analysis of the water global (technical, social and environmental) specificities of Afghanistan. It can no longer be avoided as it could be done at the policy making stage. To be realistic and efficient, the strategy should reflect the ground realities. With this respect, and as stated for the irrigation schemes in another point of this conclusion, there is a relevant gap of knowledge hampering the process of defining right priorities and options. No real diagnosis on the performance of irrigation schemes in Afghanistan has been done while methodologies, tools and specialised institutions exist.

Which knowledge and analysis to support the orientations and decisions of the stakeholders?

Lack of reliable information and analysis is a critical issue Afghanistan is facing for its reconstruction and development, especially in the water sector. The short-term nature of funding and programming for more than two decades has resulted in little room for reflection and analysis and minimal investments in research and learning. Globally since 2001 the efforts to fill the gap, in comparison with the needs, have been limited except for the few actions outlined in the next paragraph. Moreover, these rare research studies and evaluation-related initiatives lack coordination and strategy within the water sector. Consequently, policy makers and practitioners frequently base their decisions on incomplete analysis and untested assumptions often leading to significant negative impacts on the quality of strategies policies and assistance activities.

What about M&E, which is another means of learning and analysing from an operational perspective and people's experience? This aspect was not studied in detail within the framework of this study. Does each sector programme (detailed in this report) have its own internal process? Are M&E systems designed and developed by the donors and their partners pertinent and oriented towards lessons learning? A proper (full and independent) monitoring and evaluation system within the water sector would help to assess such and such approach and programme designed or chosen by the donors. Stronger coordination and focus on M&E can only lead to better control and quality on the present and future actions.

The NGO Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit (AREU) created after 2001 is today carrying out applied research work (with EC funds) with the support of experienced NGOs on social water management. The objective is, through comparative study of different irrigation contexts in Afghanistan, to produce a typology of the schemes. This typology should be based on both technical and social aspects and result on practical recommendation for improved policy and programming. Beside this, FAO with the help of NGOs has made a national inventory of the irrigation schemes gathering information on the general and physical aspects of the water networks. KRBP with the participation of NGOs is also involved in research action work on social management within irrigation schemes, and upper catchments protection. Finally, the World Bank is contributing through the EIRP to the reconstruction of the hydro-meteorological network.

Annexe 1: List of the institutions and persons met

11/07/05	Jean Mazurelle and Christophe Bösch (World Bank)
12/07/05	Qasim NAIMI (Advisor at the MEW) Arnaud Cauchois (EC Kabul delegation)
13/07/05	M. IMANISHI (JICA) Alan ROE (Natural Resources Officer AREU)
14/07/05	Raphy FAVRE (FAO consultant) John Ratsey (FAO EIRP) Hans Husselman (GTZ / RODECO) Nihal Fernando and Eng. Mir Ahmad (World Bank) Cyril LEKIEFS (Evaluation unit, MADERA)
17/07/05	M. Abela (PCIAsia / ADB) Hans Husselman (GTZ/RODECO) Zaher Sharif Shorbair (FAO EIRP) Dr Puspa (FAO WRI) Dr Thilo Hatzius (Advisor at the MEW) Ing. Najib Nagibullah (WFP, Kabul office)
19/07/05	John Priest (infrastructure officer RAMP/USAID) Robert D’Cruz (Head of Engineering Department (OC team/NSP) Clément Bourse (Solidarités, head of mission)
20/07/05	Leendert Vijselaar (Water Sanitation Programme, DACAAR) Mohammad Asif (Rural Development Programme, DACAAR)
24/07/05	Theo Riedke and Daniel Bronkal (GAA) Shoko Shimosawa (UNHCR Kabul)
26/07/05	Dr Puspa (FAO/MEW) Dr Hatzius (advisor at the MEW)
27/07/05	Thomas Panella (ADB)
04/08/05	Mohammad Anwar (NSP, OC Bamyán)
07/08/05	Ghulam Reza Suhrabi (PCU/EIRP Kunduz) Alex FJ Hamming (consultant, KRBP Kunduz)
14/08/05	Asadullah Anwar (EIRP / FAO Herat)
18/08/05	Eng. Ahmad Shah (EIRP / FAO Herat)
21/08/05	Fazel Ahmad Zakri (Herat provincial Director, ID (MEW)) Ahmed Jama (WFP Herat) M. Shah Rauf (RDP officer, DACAAR Herat office)
24/08/05	Dr Azizi (MEW advisor)
27/09/05	Basir Sami (DAI/RAMP)

28/09/05 M. Osmanzai (CIMMYT Country director)

30/08/05 Faizal Amin (FAO/EIRP)
Cedric Fioeku (Student, Madera Jalalabad)

31/08/05 Haji Delawar (Jalalabad provincial Director, ID (MEW))

03/09/05 Sylvain Adout (Civil Engineer, MADERA Kabul)
Jelle Beekma (KRBP)

04/09/05 A. Rahman Manan (ICARDA)

15/09/05 S. Delpierre (ECHO Kabul)

20/09/04 Dr Azizi (MEW)
Joseph Kandeh and Kenna Kelly (AIMS, UN agency)
Dr Thilo Hatzius (MEW)
Hans Husselman (GTZ, RODECO)

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