

# Review of Capacity Development Initiatives in Afghanistan

RAHNUMA PROJECT LEARNING PAPER

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**Disclaimer**

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the Review team and do not necessarily reflect those of Adam Smith International (ASI). Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by ASI of the opinions expressed.

## Abbreviations

ACBAR	-	Afghan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development
ACEP	-	Afghan Civic Engagement Program
AWN	-	Afghan Women's Network
AICS	-	Afghan Institute for Civil Society
AKF,A	-	Aga Khan Foundation, Afghanistan
ACEP	-	Afghan Civic Engagement program
ASI	-	Adam Smith International
BPHS	-	Basic Package of Health Services for Afghanistan
CB	-	Capacity Building
CSJWG	-	Civil Society Joint Working Group
CBO	-	Community Based Organisations
DFID	-	Department for International Development UK
EU	-	European Union
FCAS	-	Fragile and Conflict Affected States
IP	-	Implementing Partner
INGO	-	International Non-Governmental Organisation
RP	-	Recipient Partner
LNGO	-	Local (Afghan) Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	-	National Solidarity Programme
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
OD	-	Organisational Development
UNAMA	-	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2017, as part of the *Rahnuma Technical Assistance to the Tawanmandi Sector Based Core Partners Project*, a brief review of capacity development initiatives aimed at strengthening civil society in Afghanistan was conducted. The Review focused specifically on capacity development initiatives aimed at local Afghan non-governmental organisations (LNGOs), rather than the totality of Afghan civil society. Through a series of interviews and a reading of conceptual literature and programme documents the Review:

- Identified the different approaches used for capacitating LNGOs in post 2001 Afghanistan;
- Drew out, from these best practices that can be replicated in future programming; and
- Developed a series of recommendations for donors and implementing partners.

The resulting paper, as well as, conceptualising Afghan civil society and capacity development approaches, as appropriate to fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS), presents the key findings and recommendations of the Review. Such findings and recommendations are divided into the following three broad categories:

- The subject area focus of civil society strengthening programs
- The methodologies capacity development programmes employ to support LNGOs and the need for long-term, flexible programme design
- The sustainability of Afghan civil society; financial, social and cultural.

An overview of each of these three categories is provided in this executive summary with the key findings and recommendations related to it.

### **The subject area focus of civil society strengthening programmes**

The Review considered both technical and political/social capacity development. Three areas of technical capacity needs were identified: 1) organisational development (OD) which refers to the overall functionality of an organisation, including for example financial, human-resource and results-based management; 2) the skills needed to perform the organisation's key function, whether service delivery or advocacy and 3) subject area knowledge relevant to the organisation's mandate. It was found that while programming designed to develop LNGO capacity has not ignored key function and subject area capacity there has been a far greater emphasis on organisational development. Program design and implementation going forward needs to prioritise supporting the development of LNGOs to undertake their key functions, particularly the ability to hold government to account and advocate on the part of those they are meant to represent. Having the appropriate and relevant subject area knowledge is an essential part of this.

This is not to say that the emphasis placed on OD has not been useful, particularly as these capacities are essential for securing international donor funding and developing transparent, well-managed organisations. Nevertheless, while comprehensive OD capacities may be needed for relatively well developed LNGOs; smaller, possibly newer and more remotely based LNGOs who may be more concerned about negotiating a deteriorating security environment would have differing needs. It is therefore essential that implementing partners' (IPs') 'needs assessments' don't merely assess capacities but also consider what capacities are needed as a priority for individual CSOs.

As is the case with most capacity development programming in FCAS and developing countries, what has been provided to LNGOs in Afghanistan, has focused more attention on technical skills than improving political and social capacities and contexts. Going forward, it is recommended that future capacity development programmes place as much emphasis on political and social concerns as they have on technical skills. In other words, capacity development must be designed to identify and address how LNGOs are affected and influenced by the social and political environment in which they operate in. This would include for instance: overcoming cultures of corruption that exist within civil society as in other sectors; increasing political will coming from the highest levels of government to ensure an enabling environment for civil society development; a public that appreciates the role of civil society within the Afghan context and its relevance to

stability and economic development; a civil society sector, which rather than feeling entitled to voice, is able and willing to struggle to influence government and one that moves away from dependency on international funding given its vagarious nature.

### **The methodologies capacity development programmes employ to support LNGOs and the need for long-term, flexible programme design**

Capacity development initiatives directed at LNGOs must be strategically planned and designed, moving away from one off events or activities, such as training sessions, to incorporate follow up coaching, support, assessment and refresher training. This approach demands relatively long-term programming initiatives and granting mechanisms that move away from purely output orientated short-term grants to those that support continual learning.

While donors have funded civil society development in Afghanistan over several years, this has been through a series of shorter programmes planned to engage for 3 – 5 years or less. Longer term planning would increase the efficacy of capacity development of the civil society sector. Such programmes usually provide grants to LNGOs of far shorter periods, many for less than a year; this prevents LNGOs from engaging in long term planning and learning and from keeping to a mandate and organisational direction. This short-term project based funding makes it difficult to retain staff. As such capacity inputs provided to individual staff are lost by the organisation and even the sector overall. The *Tawanmandi* fund aimed to bridge this deficit by providing longer-term grants and core funding. There may have been challenges with implementation of the fund but the rationale for this was sound and should not be dismissed due to some of the other difficulties *Tawanmandi* faced.

Longer-term programming for reasons of effectiveness and accountability needs to be continuously assessed in terms of outputs and outcomes in close consultation and collaboration with the LNGOs it aims to support. Such assessment needs to move away from reliance on quantitatively dominated monitoring and evaluation modalities that focus on the number of attendees in training sessions or number of days spent providing coaching. Instead, qualitative methodologies that can assess whether programming activities are benefiting LNGOs and progressing civil society toward desired goals and impacts will prove more useful. To respond to such an on-going assessment, programs must be flexible in design and adaptable to learning, as well as, remain applicable to the changing contexts in which LNGOs operate. The traditional log-frame approach may not allow for such high levels of adaptation and instead a complex adaptive systems approach may be more useful to explore to guide programming.

Although the Review found recognition among IPs of the knowledge, skills and experience LNGOs possess, insufficient emphasis has been placed on providing opportunities for LNGOs to share their experiences: successes and challenges; knowledge in specific areas and other points of learning with each other. Workshops and meetings among LNGOs have taken place which allow this and one IP had begun a series of exposure visits in which LNGOs from one part of the country visit an LNGO working in another part to share experiences and cement networks. It is strongly recommended that all future capacity development programmes ensure that such opportunities are made available and designed in consultation with LNGOs.

### **The sustainability of Afghan civil society; financial, social and cultural.**

Of paramount importance for continuing development of Afghan Civil Society is that LNGOs can sustain themselves and continue to function. Three aspects of sustainability have been identified through this review: financial, social and cultural.

#### **Financial sustainability**

LNGOs are highly dependent on international funding, which is likely to decrease in the near future. This dependency encourages a civil society sector that is merely responsive to the demands on the international community rather than proactive in defining its own and its constituent's interests. Some efforts to develop NGO capacity to find alternative sources of funding have taken place and similarly initiatives to improve the enabling environment for financial sustainability are being undertaken. This is an area that needs prioritisation to develop the technical skills of LNGOs in the areas of social enterprise and income generation; to explore

avenues for Afghan legislation and policy to encourage greater levels of charitable giving; and for there to be increased political will and leadership in both the government, and the civil society sector itself, to take a path toward a more self-sustaining civil society sector.

### **Cultural and Social sustainability**

A perception exists, in Afghanistan, that LNGOs are morally and financially corrupt, have been imposed by the international community and are implementing social change that runs counter to Afghan cultural mores and values. A different but equally negative view of LNGOs exists that they are purely money making businesses or have been set up to further the personal interests of an individual or small group. Supporting the development of Afghan LNGO capacity in a way that counters these perceptions is essential for the future sustainability of LNGOs.

Three important factors for achieving this have been identified. First, LNGOs must move away from a culture of entitlement to one that recognises the need to continuously advocate and lobby on behalf of those they are supposed to represent. Simply, labelling oneself or organisation as part of civil society is not in and of itself a right to voice in government policy making. Instead, civil society's influence must come from having support from constituencies of the public and struggle to have such voices heard. This is not to say that some civil society activists and organisations have not undertaken this struggle and do not represent the interests of the public they serve.

Second, Afghan civil society must continue to build on the Afghan ideals of community support and volunteerism. Donors should be careful and stop contributing to the erosion of this sense of civic duty and volunteerism. For example, donors and implementing partners must not resort to paying LNGOs or communities to perform tasks that previously community members had undertaken on a voluntary basis, such as cleaning irrigation canals or resolving small local disputes.

Third, while being careful not to impose inappropriate models or modalities, which usually come from a lack of understanding of how Afghanistan's 'traditional civil society' functions, efforts should be made for Afghanistan's modern and traditional civil society sectors to work more closely together and in doing so develop each other's capacities. Traditional and modern civil society have different areas of expertise and working together will allow them to make the most of these comparative advantages, as well as, learn from each other. Elders (both male and female) and community leaders are often in the best position to monitor service delivery, advocacy and community mobilization initiatives undertaken by LNGOs. LNGOs offer an alternative avenue for support in addressing grievances if elders are not performing in the purely voluntary non-bias manner, in which they are expected to. As such, LNGOs can play a role in holding traditional civil society to account. Further, it is likely that a closer association on the part of LNGOs with traditional civil society will lead to an improved perception of the sector by a greater swathe of the Afghan populace.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

This Review has examined capacity development initiatives designed to strengthen civil society in Afghanistan. Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) have received substantial financial and technical support from international donors during the post-2001 era. This support has seen mixed results with some Afghan CSOs progressing well while others have not<sup>1</sup>. Over the past five years, there has been large scale funding to strengthen civil society<sup>2</sup> and smaller capacity development programs combined with small grants for local Afghan non-governmental organisations (LNGOs)<sup>3</sup>, each designed to enhance the functionality and legitimacy of LNGOs.<sup>4</sup> Through an analysis of respondent interviews and literature this paper identifies current approaches to capacity development for LNGOs and makes recommendations for future programming.

As is discussed in section 2.1 of this paper Afghan civil society is made up of many formal and informal, ad-hoc and regularised bodies and organisations. These include networks, local Afghan Non-Governmental Organisations (LNGOs), associations, community-based organizations (CBOs), media outlets, youth groups, as well as, *shuras*, *jirgas*, religious institutions and individual activists. It was beyond the scope for this Review to examine capacity development efforts across the entirety of Afghan civil society. Instead, the research team focused on LNGOs, the area of civil society that most international funding and implementing partners (IPs)<sup>5</sup> efforts have been directed at, in general, as well as, through capacity development initiatives, in particular.

Four key research questions were designed to guide the Review, as follows:

- 1 What different types of capacity development initiatives aimed at LNGOs have been and are being implemented in Afghanistan?
- 2 What lessons can be learned from programming to date and what if any best practices can be identified and replicated for civil society capacity development programming?
- 3 What has motivated international donors to fund capacity development initiatives, aimed at LNGOs in Afghanistan?
- 4 What are the most appropriate recommendations for donors, implementing partners and Afghan Civil Society?

While not an initial research question this paper also addresses the main challenges facing LNGOs for financial sustainability and navigating the political landscape. This is done both because it relates to areas where future capacity development efforts could be directed and because respondents were keen to discuss such challenges with the research team.

## 1.1. Key Findings and Recommendations

The key findings and recommendations made throughout this paper are divided into three interrelated areas:

### ***The subject area focus of civil society strengthening programmes***

- There has been a greater focus on capacitating LNGOs in organisational development<sup>6</sup> than other technical skills, such as advocacy, or in subject area knowledge in line with

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that capacity development programming (or lack thereof) is the only reason why some LNGOs cease to operate or do not operate at a higher level. As will be discussed further in this paper there are other extenuating circumstances which cause LNGOs to scale back or close. However, the provision and effectiveness of capacity development is a major factor to how LNGO growth and sustainability and is the main area of exploration for this paper.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the DFID managed GBP 31.68 million Tawamandi program and the USAID USD 70 million funded Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP).

<sup>3</sup> For example, the USD 1 million Rahnuma project.

<sup>4</sup> See annex 1 for details of specific civil society strengthening programmes that this review has considered.

<sup>5</sup> The term implementing partner is used here to refer to organisations directly receiving funding from international donors to implement programming. As such it includes both not-for profit and for profit organisations.

<sup>6</sup> Organisational development is used to refer to the overall functioning of an LNGO and includes such capacities as financial management, human resource management, results-based management and overall organisational



their mandate. This has led to deficits in certain technical skills, particularly in advocacy and lobbying around policy concerns, the implementation of government programmes and policies and the capacities to monitor such implementation country wide. Future programming must be designed to support and deliver capacity development that goes beyond mere OD to develop LNGOs capacity to perform as an effective part of Afghan civil society in holding government to account and advocating on government policy, its implementation and the delivery of services.

- Civil Society Strengthening Programmes have overwhelmingly focused on developing technical capacities of individuals and organisations. Future capacity development programming should be designed to work more on improving the social and political capacities of LNGOs and the context in which they operate. For example, a greater focus should be placed on developing leadership capacities; supporting LNGOs to strive to improve the enabling environment in which they work, as well as, programme activities specifically directed at the area of government that regulate civil society. This also refers to overcoming cultures of corruption and navigating an increasingly insecure environment.

***The methodologies capacity development programmes employ to support LNGOs and the need for long-term, flexible programme design***

- There is a wealth of knowledge, experience and abilities within the Afghan LNGO sector. Future capacity development programming needs to take better advantage of this by: designing activities in close collaboration with representatives of LNGOs; conducting research prior to programme design that allows for inputs from LNGOs, that are not already determined by closed question and answer needs assessments; and programming that provides substantial opportunities for LNGOs to learn from each other. IPs need to facilitate habitual change in LNGOs so they institutionalise capturing and utilising their experiences for further learning.
- Programming aimed at strengthening the Afghan Civil Society Sector needs to continuously assess its outputs and outcomes, in close consultation with the LNGOs it aims to support in developing their capacity. This needs to go beyond the usual counting of who and how many attend training sessions or tests to see how much knowledge has been absorbed, to look at behavioural, institutional, cultural and social change. To respond to such on-going assessments, programmes must be flexible in design and able to adapt to learning, as well as, remain applicable to the changing contexts in which LNGOs operate. It may be that the logical framework approach used to guide programming needs significant revision to allow for such adaptability.
- Short-term training sessions and courses have been the dominant method used to increase the capacities of staff from LNGOs. Most programs also conduct some level of coaching or mentoring, exposure visits and other forms of on-going support to those who attend training sessions. This shift away from one-off training sessions must be encouraged, with innovative ways found to measure the organisational change resulting from coaching, exposure visits and other modalities.
- Funding provided to LNGOs is most often, if not always, through relatively short-term highly competitive grants. This form of funding runs counter to long-term sustainable capacity development of the Civil Society Sector. It can stifle coordination and collaboration among civil society actors and leads to high turn-over of staff and as such the loss of individual capacity. Donors and implementing partners, must move away from risk averse short-term project grants and find ways to provide longer term and core funding to LNGOs.
- Inappropriate incentives, such as per-diems, designed to encourage attendance at training sessions has contributed to a sense of entitlement on the part of LNGO staff. It encourages a misallocation of resources and misdirection of learning. Donors and implementing partners should agree to provide less expensive dependency encouraging incentives which will encourage participation and reinforces motivations

related to personal and sector wide capacity development. Donors will have to be flexible regarding measuring programme performance and find alternate ways to hold IPs to account. Having ten people at a training session who really want to learn is better than having 40 who are there merely to collect the per-diem.

### ***The sustainability of Afghan LNGOs; financial, social and cultural***

- Afghan LNGOs are largely dependent on donor funding which is likely to decrease in the future. This dependency encourages a civil society sector that is primarily responsive to the demands on the international community rather than proactive in defining its own and its constituent's interests. Greater efforts should be placed on capacitating civil society to be able to raise its own funds from domestic sources. This is an area that needs prioritization to develop the technical skills of LNGOs in the areas of social enterprise and income generation; to explore avenues for Afghan legislation and policy to encourage greater levels of charitable giving; and for there to be increased political will and leadership in both the government and the Civil Society Sector itself.
- A culture of dependency and entitlement has developed among some elements of Afghan civil society, who feel entitled by simply identifying as civil society actors to have a voice in defining government priorities, policy and programming. Greater efforts in selecting dedicated and motivated civil society actors for tailored support in effective advocacy and lobbying can overcome this.
- Civil society in Afghanistan is perceived by some as of Western origin, imposed as an inappropriate foreign concept, or worse still as corrupt and corrupting. Greater efforts by Afghan civil society to overtly draw on the Afghan ideals of community support and volunteerism and link to more traditional civil society bodies can help to overcome this perception. Similarly, the international community – both donors and IPs – must develop an understanding of traditional Afghan civil society and the overall role civil society has played throughout history in Afghanistan to build on that rather than detract from it in their programming. Donors need to be careful not to contribute to the erosion of civic duty or volunteerism.
- Broadly speaking civil society in Afghanistan can be divided into two sectors the traditional and the more modern. Greater efforts should be made to connect these two sectors, for the purposes of shared learning and support, overcoming the negative perceptions of the modern civil society sector and in order that they hold each other accountable.

### **1.2. Paper structure**

What follows in this, the Introductory Section of this paper, provides an overview of the methodology used to conduct the Review and an outline of its key limitations. Section Two provides the contextual and conceptual background for the paper; beginning with a brief discussion of what institutions are classified as forming civil society and an analysis of what specifically constitutes Afghan civil society. This draws attention to two distinct sectors of civil society: the traditional and more modern civil society sectors. Section Two, also, discusses capacity development and how it has been theorised as applicable for fragile and conflicted-affected states (FCAS). It argues that three levels of capacity development are needed: individual, organisational and sector wide and for analytical purposes draws a distinction between the development of technical skills and social and political capacities. Section Three of the paper presents data to support a discussion of the key findings and recommendations as listed above, and in relation to the conceptual overview provided in Section Two. Section Four, the Conclusion, returns to the research questions to identify where the Review was able to respond to these and to highlight what further questions have arisen.

### **1.3. Methodology**

This Review was not designed to be an evaluation or assessment of capacity development initiatives undertaken by different IPs. It has not aimed to measure project outcomes against a set of indicators or established values nor provide any quantitative assessment of programming efficacy. Instead, this paper presents an analysis of expert and practitioner opinions and

perspectives. As such, the research conducted for this Review has been qualitative. The Review began with four discrete research questions, as outlined above. To take account of what respondents identified as important, the work allowed for new questions and areas for exploration to emerge throughout the process.

The data for the Review has been collected from two primary sources: literature and semi-structured interviews. The literature consulted falls into the following three categories:

- Literature addressing definitions and understandings of civil society and capacity development, specifically that considering capacity development in FCAS contexts;
- Research and opinion pieces discussing civil society dynamics and programming aimed at civil society organizations in the Afghan context;
- Inception, quarterly, final reports and similar from civil society support programs

A total of nineteen individuals were spoken to either during individual or group interviews in Kabul between 11<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017. This included:

- Twelve representatives of implementing partners<sup>7</sup> providing capacity development support to Afghan LNGOs
- Six representatives of recipient partners<sup>89</sup>
- One representative from the international donor community

An iterative process was taken to analysing both secondary and primary data, with research team members<sup>10</sup> reading and re-reading interview transcripts and consulting literature until no new themes relevant to the study emerged.<sup>11</sup>

#### **1.4. Limitations**

The most significant limitation faced by this work has been the limited timescale, with only 31 work days in total allocated to design, data collection, analyses and write up. This was compounded by the primary data collection being conducted during Ramadan, when work days are shorter, and it taking place shortly after a major security incident in Kabul. Both these factors lead to difficulties in securing interviews with all categories of respondents and particularly at least one major donor. Similarly, one large USAID IP did not respond to requests for permission for their reports to be used to contribute to the review.

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<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this review implementing partners refers to INGOs and institutions providing direct and/or indirect capacity development support to LNGOs.

<sup>8</sup> Afghan LNGOs are classified as recipient partners having received capacity development support from donors and/or their implementing partners. Note that many LNGOs provide capacity development support to small organisations which is reflected in this report.

<sup>9</sup> While most interviews were face to face 4 were conducted using skype.

<sup>10</sup> The research team was made up of the Research Associate who worked full time on the Review throughout June 2017 and conducted all primary data collection. He was supported by the Research Advisor in terms of methodological approach and analysis.

<sup>11</sup> The Research Associate and Research Advisor between them have more than 10 years of experience working in Afghanistan and several years working with civil society and specifically on civil society strengthening programs. Consequently, their own observations, learning and opinions also inform this review.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The definition of civil society can be conceptualised differently, depending on context and purpose. For instance, the United Nations adopts a broad definition, in which civil society is defined as a space encapsulating different organizations and groupings operating outside of the state and marketplace such as religious institutions, universities, private schools, and charities. However, the UN definition is narrowed to include: “social movements, volunteer organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations, mass-based membership organizations, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations, as well as communities and citizens acting individually and collectively”.<sup>12</sup> The European Union (EU) similarly defines civil society as made up of “all non-state, non-profit structures” which are “non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic”.<sup>13</sup> This includes a range of organizations, associations and cooperatives representing, business interests, marginalized groups, and media. Although civil society engages on political and societal matters, it does not seek to hold political office or gain seats in government, nor earn profits<sup>14</sup>. This is not to say that individuals who work in or with civil society may not, at different times, also hold political office or work for state agencies. In sum, it is important to understand civil society as “a socially and politically constructed concept that in each context, time, and place can include different organizations, institutions, and groups”<sup>15</sup>.

Ideally, civil society, which may include organisations that directly provide services, should act as a mechanism of accountability for those who operate within institutions of power and the actors constituting the marketplace. In democratic societies, civil society is expected to hold government to account for its actions and delivery of services, such as healthcare, education and security. To do this, civil society must be viewed as legitimate by those it seeks to represent and possess the right tools to devise advocacy and policy engagement strategies. Donors' primary rationale for funding civil society capacity development initiatives in Afghanistan is to develop a strong civil society that has the capacity to do just this.

### 2.1. Civil Society in the Afghan context:

Civil society in Afghanistan is not new but it has developed and evolved substantially in the post 2001 era. Civil Society in Afghanistan, today, can be divided into two broad categories. First, ‘traditional’<sup>16</sup> institutions for ‘local’ governance and justice, such as *shuras* and *jirgas*,<sup>17</sup> and other ad-hoc bodies in which elders come together to make decisions or represent their communities’ interests to the state. Alongside these local governance bodies there has always existed volunteerism for community well-being and social cohesion. Individuals and communities engage in ‘*Ashar*’, which is a form of ‘self-help’ to address community needs<sup>18</sup>. This may also take the shape of associations or social organizations which are voluntary bodies that work to improve education and government accountability<sup>19</sup>. This category of civil society substantially contributes to local governance and community development, particularly in light of the weak reach of the state in

<sup>12</sup> UNDP Engagement with Civil Society, [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/funding/partners/civil\\_society\\_organizations.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/funding/partners/civil_society_organizations.html) accessed on 1st June 2017

<sup>13</sup> EU Country Roadmap for Engaging with Civil Society in Afghanistan, 2015-17.

[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2015-9-6\\_-\\_eu\\_roadmap\\_for\\_engagement\\_with\\_civil\\_society\\_in\\_afghanistan\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2015-9-6_-_eu_roadmap_for_engagement_with_civil_society_in_afghanistan_-_final.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Nemat, Orzala Ashraf and Werner, Karin; The Role of Civil Society Promoting Good Governance in Afghanistan; July 2016

<sup>16</sup> In using the term ‘traditional’ the Research Team do not wish to imply that these bodies have remained static, instead they adapt and change over time and place and in response to externally and internally changing contexts, needs and interests.

<sup>17</sup> The terms *jirga* and *shura* are often used interchangeably. This is inaccurate for many parts of Afghanistan where they describe distinctively different forums. A *Jirga* is usually an ad-hoc body that comes together to resolve a particular problem or resolve a dispute it can vary in size from 2 or 3 elders for a small village based dispute to hundred for a large inter-tribe dispute. Across Afghanistan other words may be used to describe similar bodies such as *maraca* or simply *jalasa* – The Dari word for meeting. *Shuras* tend to be more fixed bodies with a regular memberships and representatives from different communities who are formed around particular local governance issues.

<sup>18</sup> Nemat and Werner (July 2016)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

most areas of Afghanistan. It is also a key interlocutor between citizen's and representatives of the Afghan state.<sup>20</sup> Associations which are membership based and focus on different interest groups – such as trade associations – can also be included in this category.

The second category refers to those aspects of civil society that have substantially developed post-2001. It includes LNGOs and networks of other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and activists.<sup>21</sup> Such organisations rely primarily on international funding and are registered under the Ministry of Economy (MoE) or the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). They can most easily be referred to as the 'modern' civil society, as while such organisations and networks were not new, they have grown substantially in number, post 2001.<sup>22</sup> These organisations have been active in both service provision and advocacy and are the subject of this Review. Individual human rights and women's rights defenders and other similar activists are usually closely related to this second category of civil society. A perception exists that this modern civil society is donor driven.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, programming funded by the international community, which aims specifically at strengthening Afghan civil society has focused on the 'modern civil society' sector and particularly LNGOs. Funding for programming aimed at strengthening 'traditional civil society' has been provided, but most usually under the remit of rule of law, justice and governance strengthening rather than civil society. A clear example of this is USAID's Rule of Law Stabilization – Informal Program, which, for instance, provided male and female elders and community leaders opportunities to increase their knowledge of both Sharia and Afghan law.

Programming models which isolate traditional and modern civil society have lost an opportunity. As Neamat and Werner (2016) point to there is a need for improvement of the capacity of *both traditional and modern civil society, as traditional civil society struggle with outdated models, and imported models of modern CSOs are often inoperative in traditional settings*.<sup>24</sup> Both sectors could also play a role in legitimising and supporting each other in terms of: holding each other accountable to the citizen's and communities they are supposed to represent; skill sharing<sup>25</sup>; networking; working together in areas of common interest; monitoring government and pressuring government representatives to provide needed services.

Respondents to this Review working for implementing partners and LNGOs, while, at times, provided a broad definition of civil society as that which sits outside of the market and the state, focused on the modern sector of LNGOs and networks. This indicates that the term in Afghanistan is generally used to refer to the category of 'modern civil society'.<sup>26</sup> For ease of reading from here on forward in this paper, when using the term civil society, it is the modern civil society sector that is being referred to, unless otherwise stated.

It was apparent, from interviews conducted, that to be viewed as civil society, organisations and individuals should be struggling toward a similar goal of *shared development*<sup>27</sup>, *humanitarian*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid; Smith, D. J. (2009) *A Case Study of Community Based Dispute Resolution Processes in Nangarhar Province*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit: Kabul. Smith, D. J. with S. Manalan (2009) *A Case Study of Community Based Dispute Resolution Processes in Bamian Province*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit: Kabul

<sup>21</sup> This is not to say that such organizations did not exist prior to the Taliban (for example, the revolutionary Association of Afghan Women (RAWA) which was formed in 1977, both the Afghan Development Association and Afghan Health and Development Services were established in 1990 and the Humanitarian Action for People of Afghanistan formed in 1991. However, they were very small in number and they have increased exponentially in the post-2001 era.

<sup>22</sup> As of February 2017, there are 4,105 registered local NGOs but only 1,864 are active within the Ministry of Economy registration database. The Ministry of Justice has registered 2,550 associations (or 'social organizations'). International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, *Civic Freedom Monitor: Afghanistan* <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/afghanistan.html> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017. Representative of an INGO interviewed on 11-June-17

<sup>23</sup> Neamat and Wener (2016:2)

<sup>24</sup> Neamat and Werner (2016:IV)

<sup>25</sup> For instance, elders in communities usually have a great deal of experience in advocating and lobbying to district and provincial levels of state government.

<sup>26</sup> It is recognized by the research team that the modern civil society sector may have been talked about by respondents more as this was the subject of the research. Nevertheless, given that projects, programmes and institutions which only deal with the modern civil society sector do not make the distinction clear in their titling it is a safe assumption that in the popular imagination civil society equates to NGOs, activists and the networks they belong to.

<sup>27</sup> Representative of INGO interviewed on 12-June-17

*principles*<sup>28</sup>, and *the protection of human rights and transparency*.<sup>29</sup> This idea of common purpose is associated with the often-expressed opinion that civil society should better coordinate and collaborate, which rests on an assumption that all civil society comes from a common perspective and set of priorities. However, a vibrant civil society, by definition, encompasses different opinions, ideologies, and priorities shaped by local cultural traditions, socio-political dynamics and international donor influence. Civil society may not reach agreement on every issue but it must overcome barriers that exist within it to be effective. A recognition of difference within Afghan civil society and a desire to coordinate and collaborate around specific shared issues is perhaps a more realistic goal.

Respondents recognised the two primary roles that civil society institutions play in Afghanistan of service delivery and advocacy. As of 2015, 4,145 development projects were implemented in Afghanistan; 1,537 of which were implemented by Afghan LNGOs with a total expenditure of USD 234.56 million by LNGOs.<sup>30</sup> Most projects implemented by LNGOs are in the health sector, followed by education, agriculture, livestock and irrigation and lastly, social services.<sup>31</sup> It is more than likely that most funding has been directed towards civil society's service provision role.<sup>32</sup> Of significance has been the role LNGOs have played as facilitating partners under the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) on the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and the Ministry of Public Health's (MoPH), Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS). Both programs have been funded by multi-donor funding mechanisms and been designed by international institutions. Advocacy initiatives have tended to arise out of the Afghan civil society sector itself. As is explored in section three of this paper relatively little programming has been directed at increasing Afghan LNGOs capacity for advocacy as compared to organisational development and the capacity to deliver services.

For one respondent,<sup>33</sup> the distinction between these activities was so stark he used the term NGO to describe those organisations that provide services, and described those involved in advocacy or representing the needs of citizens to the government as CSOs. In reality, individual LNGOs are involved in both and the distinction between the two may be artificial. For instance, a LNGO providing health services is likely well positioned and motivated to campaign for better access to government health services. Providing services to communities is similarly a key way LNGOs become trusted by those they aim to advocate on behalf of. Questions of whether or not LNGOs can legitimately advocate towards government and/or the donors that fund them is a valid point and one that is revisited in Section 3 of the report.

Building trust in LNGOs on the part of the Afghan public they seek to serve and represent is particularly important, given a perception of NGOs that prevails in Afghanistan, in which they are of Western origin, being imposed as an inappropriate foreign concept, or worse still as corrupt and corrupting.<sup>34 35</sup>

Both the literature and respondents to the Review recognized the importance of volunteerism in Afghanistan but cautioned that this tradition has eroded post-2001. The past fifteen years of external development assistance to Afghanistan has created increased expectations for payment for community well-being tasks and per-diems, subsidies and other incentives, provided to communities to attend events organized by the LNGOs.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the emphasis placed on

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<sup>28</sup> Representative of Donor interviewed on 18-June-17

<sup>29</sup> Representative of LNGO interviewed 14-June-17

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Economy; *Annual Activities Report of Non-governmental Organizations* (2015)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid; (2015)

<sup>32</sup> The research team do not have the exact funding figures spent on grants and funding for advocacy or even awareness raising activities directed to LNGOs but given the sheer size of the implementation budget alone and the numbers of LNGOs involved it is fair to assume that the vast majority of donor funds have gone towards service delivery.

<sup>33</sup> Representative of LNGO interviewed on 19-June-17

<sup>34</sup> Personal communications with Afghan IP staff on 11-June-17

<sup>35</sup> When the term corrupt is used in relation to NGO and how they are perceived the research team assess that it is not only financial corruption that is being referred to but to an even greater extent moral corruption e.g. perceived sexual misconduct.

<sup>36</sup> Personal observations of the research team since 2006 and informal conversations with IP staff.

creating registered and institutionalized NGOs to channel donor funding has transformed the motivations for, and operation of, civil society. This point will be revisited and expanded upon in Section Three of the report.

## **2.2. Understanding Capacity Development**

The capacity development of institutions is recognized as an essential process to enable sustainable development.<sup>37</sup> Following the 2005 Paris Declaration, international donors pledged to provide technical support to organizations to ensure functioning systems that would foster good governance and democratization.<sup>38</sup> As this process was underway, an agreed understanding of capacity development by the international community emerged and is described as “the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time”.<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to note the distinction between ‘capacity building’ and ‘capacity development’. Upon review of the literature the term ‘capacity development’ is preferred since it acknowledges that the target recipients of this support already hold knowledge and experiences that are being further developed, as opposed to the idea that one is starting without any valid prior knowledge of a particular system or thematic area. This point was reiterated by a respondent who, works for an international coordination body and similarly did not agree with the term capacity building.<sup>40</sup> Despite this, the majority of those interviewed used the term ‘capacity building’. Further, it is important to note that capacity development of individuals, institutions or whole sectors cannot be imposed from outside but must be desired by those individuals, institutions and sectors who are as such motivated to increase their own capacities.

Drawing on literature, focused on capacity development in FCAS and other developing country contexts, five areas are identified which need to be targeted for sustainable impact: 1) Individual, which refers to the skills, abilities and motivations of individuals; 2) Organisational, which refers to the management structure, organisational culture, policies and procedures of an organization; 3) sector wide, which refers to the culmination of individuals and organisations working within a particular sector; 4) the enabling environment, which refers to the policy environment, legal and customary frameworks that enable society to function; 5) The country context, referring to, among other things, the overall level of stability and conflict within a country. These five areas are highly interdependent, with effective capacity development relying on the strengthening of all five.<sup>41</sup> The table in Box 1 defines more precisely how this conceptualisation can be applied to civil society strengthening in Afghanistan.

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<sup>37</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Challenge of Capacity Development: Working Towards Good Practice* (OECD, 2006) p.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid; OECD

<sup>39</sup> Ibid; OECD

<sup>40</sup> Ibid; OECD and Representative of an international NGO coordination body interviewed on 14-June-17

<sup>41</sup> Ibid; OECD and Derick W. Brinkerhoff, *Developing Capacity in Fragile States* (Public Administration and Development, 2010) p. 67



**Box One: Areas of needed capacity for a sustainable civil society**

Area	Description
Individual	The skills, abilities, knowledge sets and motivations of individual actors. In the case of Afghan civil society these individuals are: paid and voluntary staff of CSOs; human and women rights defenders and similar; and youth leaders and volunteers.
Organisational	The management structure and capacities, organisational culture of an organisation; the policies and procedures guiding an organization; its ability to remain financially viable; and the culmination of its staff's technical capacities and knowledge sets. In Afghan civil society this includes CSO/NGOs and networks such as the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CSJWG) and the Afghan Women's Network.
Sector Wide	Sector wide refers to the capacity of the individuals and organizations that make up Afghan civil society as a whole, being an effective body to hold government to account, and influence policy and program debates and legislation. Capacitating civil society at the sector wide level
Enabling Environment	The enabling environment includes the status of legislation and policy as it effects and governs the operation of civil society. It may also refer to the overall perception of, attitude and behavior toward civil society. In the Afghan context the perception that NGOs are corrupt can be seen as a capacity deficit at the level of the enabling environment.
Country Context	This fifth level of capacity has over-lap with the enabling environment but is broader. It includes capacity deficits such as, corruption and self-enriching elites, as well as, the overall education status of the population; the security context of a country and the authority a government holds in a country.

Section three addresses the ways in which these different areas for capacity development have been addressed by the various CD initiatives and programmes that have or are being implemented in Afghanistan.

Literature over the past two decades has pointed to the need to focus as much on political and social dynamics as on material inputs and technical skills needed to perform particular functions. This body of literature argues that capacity development initiatives can only be **supported** by external actors and that the motivation, will and leadership for capacity development and change must come from within the organisations or sector themselves. They emphasise the need to focus on developing political and social capacities as well as material and technical. The need for political and social capacities as well as technical skills is applicable across all areas of Afghan civil society. Box two illustrates which types of capacities can be classified as material and technical as opposed to those classified as social and political against the areas articulated in Box One.

It is important to highlight that supporting the development of LNGO's capacities as they relate to social and political needs is far more complex than merely developing technical skills. For, example, providing training and coaching to enhance financial management abilities, will do little to overcome cultures of corruption (a capacity deficit); providing training and coaching on community mobilization will do little to overcome a lack of motivation to travel to remote locations or work with the most marginalised groups in organisations where this does not exist (a capacity deficit); and providing gender awareness training will not overcome entrenched gender discrimination, that leads to a lack of gender sensitivity and gender inequity in LNGOs (a further capacity deficit).<sup>42</sup> As such, innovative, experimental programming is needed that allows for continual learning and adaptation as part of longer-term programmes. Such long term, adaptive and experimental programming is highly challenging, if not impossible, to monitor and evaluate using the traditional log-frame approach and monitoring and evaluation modalities that rely primarily on quantitative indicators. Instead, more qualitative methodologies that can assess whether programming

<sup>42</sup> These are merely examples are not meant to suggest that any particular Afghan LNGO lacks these capacities or that the sector as a whole is corrupt, unmotivated in gender bias.



activities are benefiting LNGOs and progressing civil society toward desired goals and impacts would be necessary. The traditional log-frame approach may also not be appropriate for use in programs that demand such high levels of adaptation. Instead a complex adaptive systems approach may be more useful to explore to guide programming. This approach takes account of the ever-changing nature of institutions and the contexts in which they exist. It recognizes that it is difficult to predict what causes such changes and that change processes need on-going analyses that takes at least as much account of political, social, cultural norms and practices as more material and technical inputs.<sup>43</sup>

**Box Two: Technical versus Political and Social Capacity Needs**

Area	Technical capacity needs	Political and social capacity needs
Individual	Skills and knowledge	Motivation
Organization	HR, financial and managerial competencies and policies and procedures	Leaderships, political will for change and development, moving away from dependency, cultures of corruption, accountability
Sector wide	Advocacy strategies, tools and tactics and how to use them in a coordinated and collaborative fashion	Leadership, political will, ability to adapt to instability and changing contexts, cultures of corruption
Enabling Environment	Resources, policies, legislation	Acceptance by the community they seek to serve, political will at the highest levels of government to support civil society development and to implement such policies and procedures
Country Context	Resources	Levels of conflict, corruption, optimism

<sup>43</sup> It is beyond the scope of the report to discuss the complex adaptive approach in more detail, for further information see Land, T., V. Hauck and H. Baser (2009), *Capacity Development: Between planned interventions and emergent processes: Implications for Development Cooperation*. Policy Management Brief: Capacity Change and Performance. ECPDM.

### 3. DEVELOPING CAPACITIES OF LNGOS: BEST PRACTICES AND WAYS FORWARD

Respondents described, and programming documents highlight, a common package of capacity development tools that IPs have been using in Afghanistan in the post-2001 era. Short training courses are the most common, followed by an array of other tools such as workshops, mentorship, coaching, on-the-job training, and exposure visits. The data also points to a commonality of subject areas that are focused on: Organisational Development (OD); Technical Skills in advocacy and to a lesser degree Subject Area Knowledge relevant to the mandate of the LNGO or grants they have been awarded. Annex Two provides an overview of the main civil society support programmes that have been implemented in Afghanistan recently.

This Section discusses these different capacity development initiatives, highlighting best practices, as well as, recommendations for future programming. The section is structured in a similar manner to the presentation of key findings and recommendations in Section 1. First it discusses what subject areas programming for civil society strengthening has focused on, whether this be OD, or other technical skills related to the LNGOs ability to influence, such as advocacy, or knowledge about the area they work in, for example in human rights, public health, or access to justice. Second, it examines the approaches taken by programmes in Afghanistan to strengthen LNGOs: the methodologies and methods followed to develop the LNGO sector's capacities. Third, it considers the broader context and argues for more focus to be placed on improving the financial, social and cultural context to enable a stronger more effective civil society sector in Afghanistan.

#### 3.1. The subject area focus of capacity development initiatives

##### 3.1.1. *Prioritizing Organisational Development*

Technical capacity refers to the skills needed to improve the skills and abilities of staff – and in doing so the organisation – to fulfil its mandate in service delivery, community mobilisation or influencing. Areas for improvement include: organisational policies and procedures; monitoring and evaluation, project management and programme development and advocacy, and expertise in a development sector.<sup>44</sup> The efficacy for the delivery of organisational capacity development was articulated by several respondents who acknowledge the benefits to improving functionality and transparency to build stronger and more effective civil society institutions. Organisational capacity development is usually promoted by donors to strengthen LNGO systems so they may receive direct funding in future. IPs provide organisational development training in several areas including: strategy, human resource management, administrative and financial management, income generation and organisational structure. Organisational development inputs are intended to build a strong base of systems and procedures which ensure accountability; without this foundation confidence will be lost from beneficiary populations, staff and donors.<sup>45</sup> However, the findings also indicated the importance of focusing on other technical aspects deemed more important for the current context.<sup>46</sup>

##### *Assessing capacity development needs*

Implementing partners use different assessments to determine capacity development needs and ensure relevancy. In the areas of OD this includes examining vision, mission and goals; human resource practices, organisational culture and structure, and financial management to name a few. However, as this paper explores, these assessments do not capture the complete picture. Donors and implementing partners measure the current operational recipient partners through a variety of needs assessment tools in areas of organisational development; technical capacity development and substantive knowledge in a subject area.<sup>47</sup> Implementing partners interviewed for this report

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<sup>44</sup> Adam Smith International, Rahnuma Inception Report (2016)

<sup>45</sup> CIIR (2006)

<sup>46</sup> Representatives of LNGOs and INGOs interviewed on 12,15 and 20-June-17

<sup>47</sup> For example, the *Rahnuma* project implemented by ASI highlights OD, programme management and improved external relations (i.e. advocacy) as key requirements for the role of a Sector Based Core Partner (SBCP) under

have largely aligned with each other in approaches taken to assess and develop organisational capacity. OD assessments consist of focus areas and checklists or guiding questions to determine the presence and content of documented strategies, policies and procedures. This is a useful process but is usually adopted after a programme has been designed without much direct input from recipient partners. Many assessments are pre-determined lists based on donor priorities in order for recipient partners to comply with their rules and regulations but not addressing the entirety of their needs.

Assessment tools provide a snap-shot based on pre-determined gaps based on the assumption that most LNGOs face deficiencies. These tools would benefit from greater input during programme design coupled with substantial follow-up with recipient partners to truly capture needs adequately. For example, capacity development practitioners must be careful not to place too much faith in the presence of strategic documents as this is not always indicative of an organisations true capacity or motivations for operating. In the Afghan context, the absence of policy and procedure documents does not mean there is an absence of common understandings among the board, directors and staff members of how things should and do happen. As such, looking for the existence of such policies and procedures should go beyond simply looking for the existence of documents, to provide a more nuanced understanding of an organisation's needs and existing capacities in this area.

Furthermore, there are 'visible' and 'invisible' factors to organisational development. The 'visible' refers to the policies and structures in place contrasted with broader, more 'invisible' aspects. In other words, the intangible motivations and ethos shaped by ones political and social environment. This is difficult to measure but lay at the heart of why and how an organisation will function. The literature further cautions that attempts to focus on policies first because it may be easier to address will not result in desired improvements since the basics – in this case the mandate, rationale and strategic focus – must be in place first<sup>48</sup>. It is here where some critics<sup>49</sup> of the current models to capacity development emphasize the need to ensure relevance for LNGOs<sup>50</sup>. There is truth when IPs claim their capacity development initiatives have aspects of being demand driven since they are to the extent that they can be. However, most programmes will only truly be demand driven when LNGOs are present active co-participants during the design stage of a future programme.

Donors place a high – some argue too high – emphasis on having policies and procedures in place ultimately to combat different forms of corruption. Trained and enforced policies on human resources, procurement, administrative functions and financial processes are necessary to build confidence that an NGO is operating in a transparent and accountable manner. In reality, policies alone do not deter against corrupt behaviours and practices. The organisational support may provide a framework in which to operate in a transparent manner but if this is not enforced by the organisations leadership and staff, likely due to pervasive corrupt mind-sets and practices, then it is of no consequence. Whereas developing the technical skills related to policy and procedures may lead to an organisation being capable of putting checks and balances in place to prevent corruption only a change in the social and cultural norms that may lean toward cultural practices are likely to make significant inroads into overcoming corruption within the civil society or any other sector. Capacity development that only focuses on technical skills may contribute to more accountable organisations but a broader engagement that focuses on the political and social capacity deficits is needed to address the root causes at a behavioural level.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, while comprehensive human resource, financial, results-based management capacities and similar may be needed for large relatively well developed LNGOs; smaller, possibly newer and more remotely

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Tawanmandi. They adapted assessment tools from other sources including the Bond's *Assessing effectiveness in building the capacity of organisations and institutions*, (2013).

<sup>48</sup> Ubels and Fowler (2010)

<sup>49</sup> Representative of international NGO coordination body interviewed on 14-June-17

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Winter, *Civil Society Development in Afghanistan* (London School of Economics, Centre for Civil Society and ESRC Non-governmental Public Action Programme, 2010) p. 29

<sup>51</sup> This perspective is not only clear in the conceptual literature but was understood by respondents for example a representative of Afghan civil society body interviewed on 13-June-17

based LNGOs who may only have a permanent staff team of 2 or 3 people and whose major concern might be negotiating a deteriorating security environment have differing needs. It is therefore essential that IP's 'needs assessments' don't merely assess capacities but also consider what capacities are needed as a priority for individual CSOs.

*The need for increased technical capacity development to enable effective advocacy*

The importance of developing OD capacity was well recognised by respondents. However, the need for increased capacity in advocacy was the most discussed amongst the respondents and echoed by recent participants of trainings provided by ACBAR<sup>52</sup>. LNGOs need to build their capacity in influencing skills and foster cooperative relationships instead of competitive ones.<sup>53</sup> Afghan civil society has been criticised for their use of adversarial tactics, such as making broad accusatory statements towards government, without any rigorous evidence, which has contributed to tense relations with government actors. Far greater emphasis is needed to support the development of LNGOs capacity for prioritising areas for advocacy; policy and governmental budget analyses; advocacy skills, such as lobbying, negotiation and persuasion, how to work with existing coordination bodies and platforms, messaging, and campaigning. Crucially important to this is developing LNGOs capacity for evidence-based advocacy. Due to the lack of research capacity, in general, in Afghanistan, combined with the high level of technical skills needed to conduct primary data collection and analyses, a focus on using secondary sources, existing statistics and working with research organisations is needed. A respondent from one IP reported how recently, in their fourth year of implementation, they are now providing training on how to use secondary research material to contribute to advocacy initiatives<sup>54</sup>. It is recognized and appreciated that donors are reluctant to directly fund locally-led, indigenous advocacy campaigns however this does not preclude donors from funding initiatives to support the development of LNGOs capacity to undertake advocacy themselves.

This sub-section has discussed the utility of developing OD capacity among LNGOs and argued for greater efforts to incorporate other types of capacity development more robustly, specifically advocacy skills. Future capacity development initiatives must go beyond mere OD to enable LNGOs to perform as an effective part of Afghan civil society in holding government to account and advocate on all areas of government policy, its implementation and the delivery of services. Furthermore, it was argued that the overwhelming focus for capacity development in the LNGO sector has been on technical skills and abilities and that a far greater amount of attention must be placed on improving the social and political needs of LNGOs and the context in which they operate.

### **3.2. The methodologies programmes employ to support the capacity development of LNGOs and the need for long-term flexible programme design**

Different approaches and tools for capacity development have been used to delivery support. This section un-packs these and provides recommendations on how to improve the delivery of capacity development programming aimed at the civil society sector.

There is a clear desire coming from LNGOs for continued international support to capacity development of the civil society sector. Nevertheless, current approaches, methods and tools used by IPs are criticised. More so than anything else is that of short, 1-3 day training courses and/or workshops. Many found the timeframe to be insufficient to capture knowledge; the content to sometimes be irrelevant or outdated and the facilitation style not suitable to generate or sustain interest. IPs need to continue to find ways to ensure that knowledge is communicated and absorbed by placing more attention on learning needs and innovative techniques to deliver the information. Working with and directly supporting senior management is also key as this will aid strengthen their leader skills but also institutionalise the other changes brought forth. Recipients of such training, must similarly recognize and respect the opportunity provided for learning, try to

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<sup>52</sup> Hamid Ahmad Aryan *Training Evaluation Report, Kabul*, (Afghan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development, 2015) p. 9

<sup>53</sup> Representative of an Afghan coordination body interviewed on 11-June-17

<sup>54</sup> Representative from an INGO interviewed on 19-June-2017

extract as much knowledge as possible by taking an active enquiring approach and ensure relevant and appropriate staff are selected to attend such training sessions. Instances where irrelevant staff (ex. drivers and staff from other departments not relevant to the training, staff too junior or too senior) are sent to training sessions will either not be able to learn at the event or not be able to use the information provided to the benefit of the organisation they work for. Some have argued that training sessions and workshops can be poorly delivered with little to no follow-up. According to one respondent<sup>55</sup>, the modalities and methodologies used in capacity development have stayed stagnant since 2003 and require a complete overhaul in content and approaches. While there may be some truth to this, IPs have in fact worked to design more participatory trainings. However, the degree to which IPs provide follow-up services and how they measure success in implementation deserves greater attention. Beyond training sessions, IPs should continue to incorporate and increase the levels of on-going coaching and mentoring of LNGOs to maintain interest and retain content. Another manager from a leading INGO echoed this sentiment and saw constant follow-up with LNGOs, especially grassroots organizations as essential to ensure the adoption of knowledge delivered.

“Most CSOs just do lecturing and presentations and slideshows and it is mostly with an eight thirty start and a tea break and a lunch break. Trainers themselves lack the knowledge of the topic they are training on” – Manager with a Local NGO

One popular modality to deliver capacity development is the *cascade model*. Cascading refers to a training of trainer scenario, in which a key resource person from one organisation undergoes training in a subject area, with the purpose of transferring that knowledge to peers within their organisation and/or to peers from other organisations who need the same skills, knowledge or information. The recipient is trained on facilitation techniques to accurately deliver the training to other LNGOs. This process of skills transfer continues down a chain of organisations until each targeted group has received the training. Respondents agreed that there is utility in using the cascade model when delivering capacity development activities. Respondents saw this model as pragmatic given the usual short timeframes and budgetary constraints on most capacity development initiatives. Moreover, some respondents went further to note that the cascading model is important because it allows stronger national NGOs and associations to support fledgling, grassroots organizations. This also encourages indirect peer to peer learning while attempting to ensure a higher degree of sustainability<sup>56</sup>. There is an expectation for larger, stronger organizations to give back and provide similar support to smaller agencies<sup>57</sup>. However, it is clear that the model has its flaws and an extensive review of how cascading is delivered would go a long way in making it more effective and sustainable. For example, once the training is delivered efforts are made by some IPs to follow-up to ensure knowledge was captured adequately and relayed thoroughly. Structured follow-up has even been incorporated into some capacity development programmes. This needs to be incorporated more widely during design, implementation and monitoring of capacity development activities. Such assessment needs to move away from reliance on quantitatively dominated monitoring and evaluation modalities that focus on how many of who attend training sessions or number of days spent providing coaching. Instead, qualitative methodologies that can assess whether programming activities are benefiting LNGOs and progressing civil society toward the desired for goals and impacts. Structured, supported models of cascading was reiterated by respondents from both IPs and RPs who argued that this additional support ensures a higher level of quality, retention and transference. The intention here is to enable actual behaviour change which takes more intensive support than what has been done in the past as long as this is incorporated from the beginning. One project only added this approach in Year Four of a five-year project which is too late<sup>58</sup>. Future iterations of capacity development using the cascade approach should explore this to better understand the motivations and dynamics involved.

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<sup>55</sup> Representative from a LNGO interviewed on 20-June-17

<sup>56</sup> Representative of INGO interviewed on 19-June-17

<sup>57</sup> Representatives of a LNGO, an INGO and IGO interviewed on 11 and 15-June-17

<sup>58</sup> Representative of INGO interviewed on 19-June-2017

*Recognising and making use of existing knowledge, experiences and skills of Afghan Civil Society*

All too often capacity development initiatives focus on external inputs without enough consideration or recognition of Afghan knowledge, experiences and capacities. Avenues for peer-to-peer learning include activities such as networking events, workshops and internal exposure visits. All respondents<sup>59</sup> praised the utility of exposure visits as a key tool in capacity development. Exposure visits facilitate first hand learning and best practice between two or more groups of participants from different but similar contexts. Exposure visits allow staff from one organization to learn from real examples of change from other organizations or associations which are implementing similar projects or undergone similar capacity development support. This can be an excellent opportunity for Afghan staff from LNGOs to learn directly from their peers while leveraging the external inputs received in the form of trainings and workshops. Many exposure visits have been facilitated outside of the country but more are being conducted within Afghanistan now. Respondents from two INGOs highlighted the successes they had enabling visits for LNGO staff which included learning on financial sustainability and advocacy.<sup>60</sup> This is partially due to pragmatic reasons as this is lower in cost but more importantly it demonstrates a great opportunity for Afghans to learn from each other. There is a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience in Afghanistan that has been recognized by IPs. Unfortunately, insufficient attention has been placed on providing opportunities for LNGOs to share their successes and challenges; sectoral knowledge and any other relevant experiences or points or learning with each other. It is strongly recommended moving forward that future capacity development programmes include internal exposure visits in their design in collaboration with LNGOs.

### **3.3. The sustainability of Afghan LNGOs: financial, social and cultural**

This section examines the financial, social and cultural aspects to LNGO sustainability and discusses the challenges impeding an enabling environment for LNGOs.

#### **3.3.1. Financial sustainability of LNGOs**

Respondents from implementing and recipient partners agree that LNGOs are facing increasing challenges to sustained funding. This is not to say that all Afghan LNGOs are in imminent danger of shutting down but they are facing a reduction in funding from traditional, institutional donors without a clear plan to supplement lost revenue. Post-2001 era, LNGOs have received a steady stream of funding from donors to provide services. LNGOs have become accustomed to generating revenue from institutional donors but have not developed substantial alternative revenue streams. As donor funding began to taper since the withdrawal of NATO troops, LNGOs have been left financially vulnerable. LNGOs do continue to receive funds which includes via partnerships with INGOs, but they have fewer direct funding relationships with donors. It is perceived that despite significant years of capacity development provided to LNGOs, donors still do not believe they are strong enough or transparent enough to receive and implement large amounts of direct funding. As one respondent stated, this occurs even though it is the LNGOs that have better relationships with communities and after gaining experience working alongside INGOs for years.<sup>61</sup>

“...at that time [post-2001] donors were running after LNGOs, now LNGOs are running after donors”. – Manager with an INGO

Sustainability however, does not necessarily mean that a specific organization must exist indefinitely. On the contrary, sustainability may refer to the level of *effectiveness* an organisation has implementing its chosen mandate<sup>62</sup>; once achieved the organisation is no longer needed. While organisations and civil society actors may operate for short or long periods of time it is

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<sup>59</sup> Includes Representatives from two INGOs who routinely incorporate this activity as part of their capacity development programming towards LNGOs. Representatives interviewed 11 and 19 June-17

<sup>60</sup> Includes Representatives from two INGOs who routinely incorporate this activity as part of their capacity development programming towards LNGOs. Representatives interviewed 11 and 19 June-17

<sup>61</sup> Representative from an Afghan NGO coordination body interviewed on 11-June-2017

<sup>62</sup> Catholic Institute for International Relations (2005)

crucial that the sector manages itself by proactively addressing constituent needs. Funding that comes from the donor community must be for a longer funding window that is less project-based and with fewer caveats to core funding. *Tawanmandi* may have experienced problems with implementation but the provision of longer-term project and core funding afforded LNGOs with a greater ability to act strategically and retain core staff<sup>63</sup>. Contrast this with the ACEP which focuses mainly on short, project based funds. LNGOs must devise alternative funding strategies so they are not beholden to the international donor community and better positioned to work in ‘underfunded’ areas. Potential alternatives to be explored include membership fees, access to private sector funding, community philanthropy, social enterprises<sup>64</sup> and financial investments from the Afghan diaspora. Several factors need to be in place to foster these financial alternatives such as regulations around corporate philanthropy, which according to respondents is not sufficient to incentivise private sector funding to LNGOs<sup>65</sup>.

An enabling environment for LNGOs requires the state to ensure it provides a “functioning legal and judicial system giving them the right to associate, secure funding, freedom of expression, access to information and the ability to participate in public life”<sup>66</sup>. Beyond creating greater opportunities for fundraising, an enabling environment allows civil society to effectively monitor government performance and contribute to decision-making processes<sup>67</sup>. Several respondents and previous research agree that access to information is key for civil society as this allows CSOs to review, comment and propose ways forward on new legislation and government policies and will build trust and contribute to reducing corruption<sup>68</sup>. President Ashraf Ghani signed the Access to Information Law in December of 2014. The law applies of all governmental and non-governmental institutions, such as NGOs, CSOs and political parties. The law itself is a major step towards transparency and accountability and is on par with international standards<sup>69</sup>. Furthermore, the latest GoA strategy for the development of Afghanistan – the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) – explicitly mentions CSOs and media as ‘significant contributors’ to Afghanistan’s development as watchdogs and partners<sup>70</sup>. Unfortunately, not only has there been little movement on this official position by the GoA but instead civic space is being actively eroded by a government that seeks to limit criticism and gain greater control over aid budgets<sup>71</sup>. Greater financial independence would better position Afghan LNGOs to set their own agendas and refute the perception they merely pander to western influence.

### 3.3.2. Cultural and Social Sustainability

Afghan civil society has morphed considerably during the post-2001 era. ‘Traditional’ civil society has witnessed the considerable growth of ‘modern’ civil society actors. To some degree the two sectors have struggled to co-exist with both fuelling negative perceptions of the other.<sup>72</sup> A perception exists in Afghanistan that LNGOs are morally and financial corrupt, have been imposed by the international community and are implementing social change that runs counter to Afghan cultural mores and values.<sup>73</sup> A different but equally negative view of LNGOs exists that they are purely money making businesses or have been set up to further the personal interests of an individual or small group.<sup>74</sup> Developing Afghan NGO capacity in a way that counters these perceptions is essential for the future sustainability of LNGOs.

<sup>63</sup> Rahnuma Quarterly Report (2017)

<sup>64</sup> Altai Consulting, *The State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan*, September 2016

<sup>65</sup> Representative from an INGO interviewed on 11-June-17

<sup>66</sup> EU (2015)

<sup>67</sup> Greijn, Hauck, Land, and Ubels (2015)

<sup>68</sup> Altai Consulting, *The State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan*, September 2016

<sup>69</sup> Integrity Watch Afghanistan, *Access to Information in Afghanistan: A Preliminary Review*, (IWA, 2015) p.6

<sup>70</sup> Afghanistan Peace and Development Framework

<sup>71</sup> Representatives of a LNGO, INGO and two IGOs interviewed on 11-June-17 and 15-June-17

<sup>72</sup> Winter, Elizabeth (2010)

<sup>73</sup> Representative of IGO interviewed on 15-June-17, personal communications with staff of implementing partners and civil society organisations.

<sup>74</sup> On the contrary, ‘modern’ civil society actors who in many respects are seen as elitist perceive religious and traditional actors as archaic who disrespect human rights and can detract from peace and development initiatives.

Three important factors for achieving this have been identified. First, LNGOs must move away from a culture of entitlement to one of struggle. Simply labelling oneself or organisation as being part of civil society is not in and of itself a right to voice in government policy making. Instead, civil society's influence must come from having support from constituencies of the public and struggle to have such voices heard. This is not to say that many civil society activists and organisations have not undertaken this role and do not represent the interests of the public they serve. The need to develop advocacy capacity among LNGOs to enable effective engagement with government and other power holders, is highlighted above.

Second, Afghan civil society needs to continue to build on the Afghan ideals of community support and volunteerism. Donors should be careful not to contribute to the erosion of this sense of civic duty and volunteerism. For example, donors and implementing partners should not resort to paying LNGOs, or communities through LNGO, to perform tasks that previously community members had undertaken on a voluntary basis, such as cleaning irrigation canals or resolving small local disputes. This has led to the perception that LNGOs have been 'spoiled' and hold a sense of entitlement to donor funding. If LNGOs want to engage in activities that are not currently donor funded, then the impetus is on LNGOs to find the resources to do so and not wait to be facilitated by the international community<sup>75</sup>.

A respondent from an Afghan institute opined that Afghan NGOs have been 'spoiled' by the donor community and instead of requesting funds for advocacy efforts should be encouraged to find better ways to engage amongst themselves.<sup>76</sup> This reiterates the earlier point made on the state of volunteerism in Afghanistan. Some have argued that this has been eroded due to poorly designed incentives that interrupted community volunteerism which long pre-dated the external support to Afghan civil society.

Third, while being careful not to impose inappropriate models or modalities, which usually come from a lack of understanding of how Afghanistan's 'traditional civil society' functions, efforts should be made for Afghanistan's modern and traditional civil society sectors to work more closely together and in doing so develop each other's capacity. One could borrow from techniques used in peace-building programming to broach sensitive topics, (mis)perceptions and resentments and encourage reconciliation<sup>77</sup>. A more holistic and inclusive civil society could lead to greater development outcomes if approached appropriately and with long-term objectives in mind. Traditional and modern civil society have different areas of expertise; by working together it allows them to make the most of these comparative advantages as well as learn from each other. Elders (both male and female) and community leaders are often in the best position to monitor service delivery, advocacy and community mobilization initiatives undertaken by LNGOs. LNGOs offer an alternative avenue for support in addressing grievances if elders are not performing in the purely voluntary non-biased manner, in which they are expected to. As such, LNGOs can play a role in holding traditional civil society to account. Further, it is likely that a closer association on the part of LNGOs with traditional civil society will lead to an improved perception of the sector by a greater swathe of the Afghan populace. LNGOs must also actively demonstrate their added value and support to community development through quality programme implementation and sound representation with tangible outputs.

It is recommended that donors provide access to longer-term project and core funding to LNGOs to enable greater financial security while LNGOs actively pursue alternative funding models with membership fees, social enterprises and non-traditional donors such as private corporations. Donors must do away with poorly designed incentives, such as per diems, that fuel a sense of entitlement while delegitimizing the capacity development it is trying to deliver. Technical support must continue but greater emphasis needs to be placed in areas of advocacy so LNGOs have the tools needed to engage government and stakeholders in a more robust manner. Special attention must be given to Afghan expertise which is an excellent opportunity for greater peer-to-peer

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<sup>75</sup> Representative from an international donor interviewed on 18-June-2017

<sup>76</sup> Representative from an Afghan institute interviewed on 13-June-17

<sup>77</sup> Winter, Elizabeth (2010)



learning. Future capacity development initiatives must address the root political and social causes of detractors to real behaviour change such as endemic corruption.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

This concluding section returns to the initial Research Questions posed by this review of capacity development initiatives aimed at Afghan Civil society.

- 1 What different types of capacity development initiatives aimed at LNGOs have been and are being implemented in Afghanistan?

Donors and implementing partners attempt to provide demand-driven capacity development to recipient partners determined through needs assessments and programme design. This support has overwhelmingly focused on organisational development especially in the areas of project management, financial management and administrative policies, at the cost of fostering other technical skill-sets such as advocacy. Furthermore, a lack of flexibility and inclination for short timeframes and limited monitoring has made it difficult to accurately measure change in behaviours. Capacity development programming largely ignores political and social capacity needs such as addressing corruption within the sector and tools to navigate growing insecurity in the country.

- 2 What lessons can be learned from programming to date and what if any best practices can be identified and replicated for civil society capacity development programming?

Capacity development is delivered in an ad hoc manner that would benefit from improved coordination, oversight and quality assurance. Greater focus must be placed on accessing and disseminating Afghan knowledge and experiences that would enhance peer-to-peer learning opportunities through exposure visits and innovative, deftly facilitated workshops and networking events. Cascading approaches remain a pragmatic method to disseminating support but must contain structured, consistent follow-up by resource personnel to track progress and ensure quality. Further evaluation of this approach is recommended to determine and address gaps.

- 3 What has motivated international donors to fund capacity development initiatives, aimed at LNGOs in Afghanistan?

Due to the difficulties faced in interviewing representatives of the donor community it has not been possible to discuss this question in depth. Despite this, it is clear that, a broad motivation exists to strengthen Afghan Civil Society to hold the Afghan government to account and give citizens voice beyond the ballot box. In turn this will contribute to fostering a sustainable democratic state in Afghanistan. However, the largest amounts of funds going to civil society have been in the form of funding to deliver services that the Afghan government lacks the capacity to deliver. This has been particularly in the areas of health, rural development, and education and often as part of large internationally funded government programs. This questions the level of independence LNGOs have from government and whether or not they can effectively criticise government capacity to deliver services. Furthermore, risk averse strategies of donors and IPs which have led to short-term project focused funding to LNGOs, as argued above, does little to strengthen the sector's capacity to define itself and develop as a civil society able to hold government to account and advocating in the interest of the communities it is meant to represent. Indeed, in some ways these funding mechanisms may be detracting from this. Funding mechanisms must be devised that are not only transparent and demand excellence in performance but which also allow Afghan civil society the room to find its way and define priorities.

- 4 What are the most appropriate recommendations for donors, implementing partners and Afghan Civil Society?

Several recommendations have been made throughout this paper which fall into the three categories of the subject areas that civil society support programs have addressed; the delivery methodologies used by IPs, and the sustainability of the 'modern' civil society sectors. The most important are summarised again here:

*The subject area focus of civil society strengthening programs*

- Greater attention should be given to supporting the development of LNGOs abilities to undertake evidence-based advocacy and better utilising invited and claimed spaces for influencing;
- Capacity development initiatives must move from prioritising the development of technical skills and put at least as much effort into political and social capacities and improving the enabling environment.

*The methodologies employed by capacity development programmes employed to support LNGOs*

- Programming for inception, through design, implementation and evaluation must listen to Afghan LNGOs perspectives;
- Capacity development initiatives will prove far more effective and efficient if they make greater use of the knowledge, skills and experience that already exist within the LNGO community, particularly through peer-to-peer learning methods and experience sharing;
- Capacity development must move away from the dominance of short training course to a program of continual learning that includes coaching, follow up and on the job training.
- LNGO senior management should be strengthened to further develop their own leaderships skills and to institutionalise organisational change and development.

*The sustainability of Afghan LNGOs; financial, social and cultural*

- Afghan LNGOs need to move away from a dependency on international donor funding and be supported to develop the skills for social enterprise and attracting domestic funding
- Government policy should be supported to facilitate greater domestic contribution to the civil society sector
- With great care, stronger links between the traditional and modern civil society sectors should be encouraged

# Annex 1 – Interview Guides

## INTERVIEW GUIDE DONORS

### Introduction:

#### *Interviewer*

- Introduce yourself (and probably me as I'll be looking at the raw data)
- The purpose of the study
- Our relationship with ASI
- Level of confidentiality of data
- How long interview will be
- Note taking
- Get consent

#### *Respondent*

- How long in position
- How long in Afghanistan
- Previous work with civil society (in Afghanistan or elsewhere)

### **Part A: Fact checking/history/rationale** (RQ1; RQ1a; RQ1b; RQ1c; RQ1d)

- Current funding to/programming for civil society & specific civil society CD programming
- Funding provided to civil society & specific civil society CD programming since 2001
  - Value of funding
  - Funding mechanisms (links to other donors)
  - Length of programs
  - Implementing partners
- Program descriptions
  - Outcomes/objectives
- Future – are they planning on continuing to fund such programs – if willing to share - get details.

### **Part B: Rational/LNGO needs/methodologies** (RQ1b; RQ1c; RQ 2c; RQ1d; RQ3; RQ3a; RQ3b)

- Why fund civil society CD in this way or at all?
- What was your selection criteria?
- Why CD programming for civil society?
  - What are you aiming to capacitate civil society to do?
  - What capacities are needed for this?
- How was it decided/realized that civil society/NGOs needed this type of programming/CD (*was it evidenced based programming?*)
  - What research etc. was done to assess what the needs of civil society in Afghanistan were/are

### **Part C: What's working / what isn't?** (RQ2a; RQ2b)

- Have you seen success
  - Description
  - What has created that success?
  - How do you define success?
  - How do you measure the success?
- Mistakes made along the way by donors?
  - What learning has happened
  - Is it possible to implement learning
  - Is enough learning being done

**Part D: Civil Society in FCAS and how to move forward for civil society given the deteriorating security/governance situation in Afghanistan? (RQ4; RQ4a)**

- In your opinion:
  - How can CD programming for civil society in Afghanistan be improved?
  - What do you think is the best way to focus CD for civil society in Afghanistan given the deteriorating reach of the Afghan government and the deteriorating security situation?

*Probe for why people hold what opinions they do hold?*

- What lessons from other FCAS countries have you/could be adapted to the Afghan context?

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Implementing Partners**

#### **Introduction:**

##### *Interviewer*

- Introduce yourself (and probably me as I'll be looking at the raw data)
- The purpose of the study
- Our relationship with ASI
- Level of confidentiality of data
- How long interview will be
- Note taking
- Get consent

##### *Respondent*

- Position / responsibilities / length of time in position with organization

#### **Part A: Background**

- What is your opinion of what civil society means in Afghanistan today and what is its purpose?
- Which donor(s) fund your CD initiatives to civil society?
  - Program length?
  - Funding amounts?
  - Are you confident of future funding opportunities for CD of Afghan civil society?
- Do you work with other IPs on design or implementation of CD?
  - Compare approaches?
  - De-conflict activities?

#### **Part B: Rational/LNGO needs/methodologies**

- Why does your organization support CD to civil society?
  - Internal strategy/focus? Responsive to donor needs?
  - Which types of CSOs do you support and for how long?
- What types of CD do you provide (organisational, technical etc)?
  - How was the CD activities determined? (Research? Needs assessments?)
  - How long has this been operational?
  - Program description/objectives/results
  - How do you decide on what to focus on and what methodologies for CD to be used?
  - How do you measure if they are successful or achieving the desired results?
- What approach do you take to delivering CD to LNGOs?
  - LNGO selection criteria?
  - Direct CD provision or cascading approach with 'strong' LNGOs to 'weaker' LNGOs?
    - Challenges and opportunities with this approach
  - Would you work for the LNGOs that you supported in the past?

#### **Part C: Lessons learned and best practices**

- What types of activities have been most successful?
  - Examples of successful initiatives by CSOs that received your CD?
- What are the key challenges to your programming?
- What type of support from the donor community would improve your CD programming?
- What changes have you made to your CD support to civil society (*this will be more relevant to IPs which have had a long-standing program*)

#### **Part D: Civil Society in FCAS and how to move forward for civil society given the deteriorating security/governance situation in Afghanistan?**

- In your opinion:
  - How can CD programming for civil society in Afghanistan be improved?
  - What do you think is the best way to focus CD for civil society in Afghanistan given the deteriorating reach of the Afghan government and the deteriorating security situation?
- Does your organization work in other FCAS?
  - If so, what lessons have been/could be adapted to the Afghan context?

## INTERVIEW GUIDE LNGOs

### Introduction:

#### *Interviewer*

- Introduce yourself (and probably me as I'll be looking at the raw data)
- The purpose of the study
- Our relationship with ASI
- Level of confidentiality of data
- How long interview will be
- Note taking
- Get consent

#### *Respondent*

- Position / responsibilities / length of time in position with organization

#### *NGO*

- When formed
- Aims of organization
- Programs it undertakes & who funds, what type of funding etc

### Part A: Role and state of Civil Society in Afghanistan

- What is the respondent's opinion of what civil society means in Afghanistan today and what is its purpose?
- How successful is Afghan civil society in fulfilling its purpose?
  - Probe for info on service delivery and advocacy but see if they come up with other things or conceptualize this differently
- What are the key challenges civil society is facing in Afghanistan?

### Part B: Capacity Development Received:

- Since formation what CD has the organization received
- For each CD program, it has been a recipient of CD from, find out the following:
  - Descriptive*
    - Who provided – donor and implementer
    - What capacities was it meant to develop?
    - What methodologies were used (*if they only talk about training probe to see if there is anything else – there is a conception that CD means training*)
      - (Mentorship? Exposure visits?)
  - Analytical*
    - How were you selected? Criteria?
    - How did those providing/funding the CD programming know what was needed by the Civil Society sector in Afghanistan & how did they know which methodologies would work best?
    - Opinion of how useful this CD was/is for the organization and the civil society sector more broadly
      - What worked well
      - What worked less well
      - Why did it work
      - Why did it not work
      - How would they change things
- Current LNGO staff who have previously worked with INGOs/international missions
  - Have you or have some of your colleagues worked for INGOs/international missions in the past?
    - What have you learned working with international organizations?
    - How has the experience working with INGOs/international missions helped with you in your current role with your LNGO?

### Part C: Providing CD to others?

- Has the LNGO been part of a program that relies of LNGOs to develop the capacity of other LNGOs?

- Ask them to describe what this has involved; the methods; how the CD is assessed etc.?
  - What support have they received to do this?
  - What do they think of this approach?
  - What motivates them to develop the capacity of other LNGOs?
  - What works well in this approach
  - What has been a challenge in this approach

**Part D: Civil Society capacity needs in Afghanistan & ways forward in a deteriorating security/governance situation.**

- What do you think are the most important capacity needs of civil society in Afghanistan?
  - Probe for the different types of capacity here – *organisational; technical; knowledge and staff resources etc*
  - See if they can define different needs for different types of NGOs – may be refer to initial conversation.
- How can the international community best support Afghanistan's civil society going forward? How can CD programming for civil society in Afghanistan be improved?
  - How do you engage with Government?
    - Successes/challenges?
    - What type of support would help overcome the challenges?
- What do you think is the best way to focus CD for civil society in Afghanistan given the deteriorating reach of the Afghan government and the deteriorating security situation?
- Do you know of examples from other FCAS that you feel may work in Afghanistan?



## Annex 2 – Examples of Capacity Development Programmes in Afghanistan

The *Tawanmandi* project launched in 2011 after two years of consultations and planning. Billed as a ‘challenge fund’, this new mechanism with a budget of GBP 31.68 million and operating in 31 of 34 provinces, wanted to take advantage of the potential for Afghan civil society to further engage and represent the needs of rural populations while increasing its interaction with the new National Unity government<sup>78</sup>. Several donors including the Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) have pooled their resources to create a fund that would provide a mix organisational development and technical capacity development to LNGOs and Associations; funding for approved projects proposed by LNGOs, and targeted support to ten Sector-based Core Partners (SBCPs) – selected to act as thematic lead agencies that would receive additional capacity development support in order to play a lead role in strengthening a particular sector<sup>79</sup>. Coupled with the inputs provided by Tawanmandi, *Adam Smith International* (ASI) was contracted to implement the ‘Rahnuma’ project – a GBP 800,000 project targeted capacity development project aimed at supporting five Tawanmandi SBCPs with a range of demand-driven capacity inputs via trainings, and extensive coaching and mentoring activities<sup>80</sup>.

*Counterpart International* (CPI) in partnership with Internews, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law have been working on strengthening civil society capacity for more than ten years in Afghanistan, which began with the implementation of two phases of the Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society I and II (IPAC I & II) followed by the ongoing Afghan Civic Engagement Programme (ACEP). With USD 70 million in funding from USAID, this programme has several major components aimed at improving civil society engagement with the GoA; building thematic expertise in the media sector; enhancing engagement between civil society and communities to build a more active citizenry and support to organisational capacity development of CSOs. ACEP provides support to the Civil Society Joint Working Group, three national based advocacy groups and has in its fourth year begun to focus more attention on developing the advocacy capacity of the LNGOs it provides grants to as well as these groups. ACEP provides grants to over 35 CSOs who work across more than 20 of Afghanistan provinces. The latter concentrates on providing support on organisational; thematic and technical capacity development<sup>81</sup>.

The *Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development* (ACBAR) provides primarily organisational development training to LNGOs directly or in partnership with other capacity development providers. ACBAR also implements an innovative ‘twinning programme’ that pairs humanitarian one LNGO with one INGOs; the INGO provides organisational development training and support to LNGOs in order for them to pass the Due Diligence standards outlined under the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)<sup>82</sup>.

The *Aga Khan Foundation, Afghanistan* (AKF, A) first began its civil society strengthening programme in 2006 working in a consortium of other INGOs to improve linkage building and coordination amongst LNGOs and other CSOs in Badakhshan and Takhar. Eventually the established coordination fora was deemed unsustainable and the consortium ceased to function. This precipitated AKF, A to launch a programme which supported LNGOs and journalists with capacity development support to improve functionality and capacity to implement projects. AKF, A currently supports women-headed NGOs with funding from Global Affairs Canada to

<sup>78</sup> Tawanmandi/British Council (2016)

<sup>79</sup> Sectors include the following key areas:

<sup>80</sup> Rahnuma Inception Report (2016). Rahnuma supported the following five SBCPs: Afghan Women’s Educational Centre (AWEC), Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), Da Qanoon Ghustony (DQG), Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) and the Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN).

<sup>81</sup> USAID; ACEP Programme Update (2017) and representative of INGO interviewed on 19-June-17

<sup>82</sup> Representative of Afghan NGO coordination body interviewed on 13-June-17

The *Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society* (AICS), conceived first as an initiative by AKF, A, AICS provides a certification service to LNGOs based on certain key indicators. LNGOs are first assessed to determine institutional gaps in organisational and technical maturity set against a range of different criteria. A full report outlining what is needed is generated and provided to the LNGO for their review and follow-up. It is the responsibility of the LNGO, or recipient partner, to acquire the capacity development needed from recognized providers. AICS does not provide any direct capacity development as this would be a conflict of interest.

The *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP), recently launched the Local Governance Project (LoGo) Afghanistan funded by the EU and SDC. The programme builds upon the Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP) and will run from 2015-2020 with a budget of USD 50 million to provide assistance to subnational executive and representative governance bodies and support to civil society. The project seeks to 1) improve accountable and transparent service delivery; 2) improve revenue generation for Municipal Services; 3) enable greater civil society oversight and 4) support policy guidelines and legal frameworks

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