



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime

**Socio- Economic & Psychological
Assessment of Fluctuations and Variations of Opium Poppy
Cultivation in Key Provinces in Afghanistan: Balkh,
Kandahar, Nangarhar and Central Provinces**

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFN	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
AGF	Anti-Governmental Forces
AHDS	Afghan Health and Development Services
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ALP	Alternative Livelihoods Project
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
AREU	Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CN	Counter Narcotics
DAP	Di-ammonium phosphate fertiliser
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups
NDCS	National Drug Control Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit
hh	Household
ICMP	UNODC Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme
IF Hope	International Foundation of Hope
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
MoRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NRVA	Natural Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PAL	Project for Alternative Livelihoods in Eastern Afghanistan
PEP	Poppy Elimination Programme
PKR	Pakistan Rupees
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PsyOps	Psychological Operations
RICME	Regional Illicit Crop Monitoring Expert
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TA	Target Audience
UNDCP/ ONDCP	United Nations Drug Control Programme
UNODC	UN Office on Drug and Crime
UREA	Nitrogen based fertiliser
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States of America Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFP	World Food Programme

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1. Overall objectives

This study is intended to investigate reasons for fluctuations and variations in opium poppy cultivation in key and representative provinces in Afghanistan; through the acquisition of in-depth socio-economic and psychological information in light of the opium poppy ban. Principally a vulnerability study, this report examines what makes one segment of the Afghan population vulnerable to the necessity and proliferation of poppy growth whilst others can re-direct their energies or avoid its cultivation totally.

2. Introduction

Opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) cultivation has been illegal in Afghanistan since January 17th 2002; however considerable problems have ensued in the implementation of this ban and many provinces have seen either an increase (often at record levels) or stabilization in the amount of opium that is produced. Few provinces have seen a considerable reduction and of those that have, they have not attained a status quo at the reduced level, but rather, have experienced a resurgence of growth. In conjunction with these fluctuations is the disturbing observation that provinces that did not traditionally grow opium poppy are now cultivating copious amounts. To ensure that future Counter Narcotics (CN) strategies are both sustainable and effectual, there is a necessity for pervasive understanding of the reasons for variations in opium poppy cultivation throughout Afghanistan.

Considerable antecedent international and national research has drawn attention to the foreseeable complications for opium poppy reduction; providing explanations of its role as a 'viable' coping strategy for large segments of the Afghan populace throughout the country's recent history. These precedent works have provided extensive and comprehensive information about socio-economic considerations and indicators of factors that induce opium poppy cultivation. However, these works have largely failed to consider key motivational considerations outside of materialistic concepts.

The complexity of factors controlling opium poppy cultivation and its entrenched role in Afghan society is never underestimated in published works, but the omission or lack of psychological considerations undermines the pervasiveness of the understanding about what makes a particular group vulnerable to opium poppy cultivation; whilst the whole country suffers from some of the worst human and social indicators in the world, - a repercussion from nearly three decades of war, civil unrest, dislocation and presently exacerbated by drought, which is now endemic throughout the country- there are clear national variations in the level of opium production.

The scale of this research –as a comparative national level investigation - is crucial to providing a thorough overview of key issues that will and do affect the efficacy of Counter Narcotics campaigns in Afghanistan. Appropriateness of scale is critical to the facilitation of 'sustainable' mitigation strategies; an overriding fallacy is the assumption that by addressing vulnerability as a national theme, it automatically achieves a reduction in vulnerability among social groups, households and individuals within that nation. That is certainly not the case; and ignores key considerations in a localities vulnerability, such as; the community's experience of the specific risks; and the community's ability to respond to, cope with, recover from and adapt to risks, which are in turn influenced by deep rooted social influences, divisions and psychologies. This concept of scale is incorporated in this study through the consideration of factors that propagate the selective populations cognisant of opium poppy cultivation as an acceptable coping

strategy, when other areas who receive comparatively less assistance refuse or are not so inclined to grow opium poppy. In line with this realisation -of the importance of scale- is the clarification of the need to diversify from the traditional linear approach of understanding vulnerability in Afghanistan, to that of the complexity theory - which provides a meta framework for pulling together elements from diverse approaches to assessing vulnerability, including psychological understanding juxtaposed with socio-economic information, similar to that attempted by Kenefick and Morgan, (2004).

At present numerous governmental and NGO's are funding multi-million dollar (USD) schemes to attempt to provide alternative livelihoods (ALP) for those people whose income is derived from opium poppy cultivation. These projects have variable success. It is important that internal and external policy makers and NGO's, understand the indigenous populations perception of their vulnerability relating to narcotics cultivation, rather than analyzing and measuring vulnerability with outside criteria. People make risk-taking or risk-avoiding decisions based on individual circumstances and experience (psychological controls). Through a better understanding of the decision making process of Afghans whether to enter into/reduce/increase cultivation it will enhance the possibility of better targeting alternative livelihood campaigns. Moreover, through the identification of various socio-economic, environmental and political factors that renders a particular area vulnerable to opium poppy cultivation, in conjunction to the comprehension of psychologies that control the weighting assigned to these variables, it may be possible to develop early warning mechanisms that allow preventative interventions to be implemented prior to narcotic crop cultivation.

It is essential that the development of a thorough understanding of Afghan psychology -in regards to opium poppy cultivation- in conjunction with socio-economic information is expedient. As opium becomes an increasingly accepted livelihood in a wider range of communities the more difficult it will be to undo the entrenched mindset; consequentially the resulting scale and nature of the interventions required to reduce opium cultivation will increase in complexity, cost and duration. The situation is further exacerbated by the recent worsening of the security situation and the persistent drought, which culminate in a negative outlook for the government's CN objective:

'To secure a sustainable decrease in cultivation, trafficking, and consumption of illicit drugs with a view to complete and sustainable elimination.' (Ministry of Counter Narcotics, 2005)

3. Key findings

Opium poppy cultivation patterns are not as easily simplified as stipulated in previous assessments. Levels (real and potential) are dependent upon a culmination of socio-economic and cultural factors which are assigned different weightings by the indigenous population in their risk decisions.

Action needs to be taken swiftly – prior to the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) review date in January 2008 - to curb the overall trend of an increase in opium poppy cultivation, and this action needs to be based upon a clear understanding of the motivational psychologies in conjunction with the socio-economic circumstances that makes a particular group vulnerable to opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

3.1. Characteristics and cultural considerations of people

- The specific psychologies of the people of Afghanistan are entrenched in their reasoning for cultivating opium poppy and contrary to popular belief an explanation of these can not be simplified and explained purely in terms of ethnicity or socio-economic status. On variable spatial scales the indigenous population are resourceful, resilient, creative, educated, opportunity seeking and entrepreneurial (as witnessed by the high incidence of labour migration, entrepreneurial activity, trading networks, and remittances), in addition to this the populace are also (on variable scales), aggressive – war faring tendencies-, resentful, defiant and covetous. The challenge is to harness the support and positive proven capabilities of the Afghan people towards prosperity and development.
- Opium poppy cultivation risk decisions formulated by Afghanistan’s rural populace are built upon a complex mix of psychological motivations and socio-economic considerations. On variable scales throughout the country, the indigenous population incorporate three stages of motivational psychology into their risk decisions:
 - The first motivational stage – which addresses basic needs and the concept of survival,
 - The secondary motivational stage – which considers concepts of affiliation and personal aspirations,
 - The third motivational stage – which promotes the notion of community/national benefits, as well as a socially responsible attitude,
 - Both Nangarhar and Central Regions showed the cognitive capacity to consider components of stage three motivational factors,
 - All locations of investigation operated within the first two stages,
 - Nangarharis presently have to place increasing priority on the first category.
- Partially related to the above categorization, it is also possible to define whether the inhabitants of provinces are progressive or retrospective in their evaluation of their circumstances and what the duration of their focus is:
 - In Balkh Province the people are retrospective in their analysis of what style of future they want – an agricultural system, based upon a highly centralized supportive body, similar to that of nearly three decades ago. They are motivated by short term reward based repercussions of their decisions; facilitating social status and security in a politically volatile area.
 - In Central Regions the population are both progressive and retrospective in their thinking – relying heavily upon proven antecedent coping strategies, whilst also showing a willingness to accommodate the impact of external changes if circumstances so necessitate- in conjunction to which they have a

- long term focus – considering what present time actions will be most beneficial for their children and the world’s future.
- In Kandahar Province the people are retrospective in their analysis of what style of future they want – forcefully advocating the concept that Pashtuns should be reinstated as the main rulers of Afghanistan. They are motivated by short term considerations, believing that force can be applied to any future problems that they have not conceptualized.
 - In Nangarhar the indigenous population are highly progressive in their thinking –willingly adapting new agricultural practices to benefit and progress their society, they also contemplate the consequence of their actions in regards to the future creation of a totally unified Afghanistan -and apply long term thought to the repercussions of their decision. However, they have had to revert to short term considerations to address the decreased stability of life.
- Whether the populations questioned were optimistic or pessimistic about the future was variable and heavily conditioned by their motivational stage, perception of the issues outside of their household as well as the tangibility of positive changes. The most optimistic people were those in Nangarhar, but this was somewhat diminished by the present circumstances resulting from non-cultivation. Central Region populations were also optimistic, although not overtly. The indigenous populations of Balkh Province expressed deep reservations about the future; being more pessimistic than optimistic. Whilst the people of Kandahar Province were exceptionally pessimistic and derogatory about the future.

3.2. Main reasons for opium poppy cultivation levels

- The weightings – and consequentially the reasons - attached to the myriad of considerations involved in the indigenous opium poppy cultivation risk decisions varies dramatically in each of the provinces sampled.
- Throughout the sampled provinces factors which affected opium poppy cultivation levels varied dramatically from the simple formulae that have been propagated in much of the antecedent written literature. It was found that cultivation does not always conform solely to the preconceived criteria of lack of water, low income, low land size per household, it is also not irreversibly dependent upon antecedent cultivation; simple application of these criteria underestimates the importance of socially and psychologically entrenched considerations.
- Factors that motivated adherence or breaches of the CN edict included:
 - The role of Islam – not a main motivator in Balkh, Kandahar and Nangarhar Provinces, but crucial to non cultivation in Central provinces.
 - Respect for government and ‘Karzai’s decree’ – this is the main reason for Nangarhar but is secondary to Central Region and Balkh Province’s motivational factors, and is totally lacking in Kandahar Provinces motivations –where disenchantment with the government is pervasive.
 - The rule of law and effective implementation of the ban and effective information campaigns are proportional to opium poppy cultivation levels in provinces – an exception being Central provinces.
 - The security situation is a key determinant in opium cultivation- in Kandahar Province the climate of insecurity propagates illicit activities, in Balkh Province the political instability and subsequent fluctuations in the areas security act as motivators to accrue finance to ensure social status and protection against negative repercussions. In Nangarhar the generally improved security situation was mentioned as a key reason for the populaces’ ability to adhere to government edicts. The Central Region has comparatively good security, which is reflective in its ability to maintain its coping strategies and non-cultivation of opium poppy.

- Political pressures and AGF pressure to provide funds for campaigns – in Balkh Province political pressures and affiliations are considerable, with people viewing this as the only means to ensure representation nationally – hence providing them with a social security; in Kandahar the pressures exerted upon the indigenous populace by AGF is immense (AGF actively encourage direct violation of the ban), however, due to the uniform ethnicity and lack of acceptance of governance in the South, political pressures are lesser than in Balkh Province; in Nangarhar politics are not important as the overwhelming majority (98%) support Karzai's government, they do not tolerate AGF; in Central Regions political affiliations are less important and AGF activity has until very recently been limited, so its impact is miniscule.
- The perceived benefits of assistance and ALP activities are crucial to positive motivation. All provinces would be less inclined to cultivate opium poppy if alternatives or pervasive support was offered. In Nangarhar the 'promises' of assistance was a fundamental 'push factor' for non-cultivation. Lack of assistance/alternatives will have the opposite effect.
- Exaggerated expectations of bilateral assistance through ALP – in Nangarhar the unfulfilled ALP 'promises' are the main reason for potential cultivation. Overall, throughout Afghanistan there is an inflated expectation of the immediate quality of assistance and reversal of negative situations, due to their perception of the power and influence of the international communities present, as well as the exaggerated perception of how a democratic system will change their lives.
- Lack of off-farm employment to supplement the on-farm income was given as a major reason for present or potential opium poppy cultivation, apart from Central Regions – who are more willing to accept migration as a viable coping strategy.
- The lack of water available for agriculture (compounded by the extended drought period and the negligible infrastructure) was given as a major reason for cultivation increases and the potential resumption of cultivation. However due to the non-cultivation in areas with similar if not worse water facilities, it can be concluded that cultivation it is related more to the preceding experience of cultivation rather than solely access to water. An example of this is seen by the fact that rain fed areas in Balkh Province are not cultivating opium poppy, neither are areas in Central Afghanistan whilst peripheral rain fed mountainous locations in Nangarhar are cultivating opium poppy – as they have done for hundreds of years.
- Size of land holding -whilst being an important consideration in deducing who is the most vulnerable to grow opium, is not so simplistically applied in reality; in Balkh and Kandahar Provinces have considerably larger land sizes than in Central Zones and Nangarhar but the afore provinces have experienced a considerable increase during the past two years, whilst Nangarhar has decreased and Central has remained relatively constant.
- Where traditional coping strategies and the development of innovative new strategies (such as utilizing new skills brought into the area by repatriated persons; farming styles, brick manufacturing) were prevalent there were lower levels of opium poppy cultivation; most clearly seen in Central provinces and Nangarhar Province.
- Antecedent experience of cultivation – in Nangarhar the previous resilience on opium poppy cultivation as a viable coping strategy is entrenched in their mentality; in Balkh Province the previous experimentation and low levels of cultivation were susceptible to being built upon during 'times of need'; in Kandahar Province, opium cultivation is deeply entrenched in the indigenous mentality and at present they are exploiting the unstable circumstances; in Central provinces the lack of preceding experience of cultivation and failed

experimentation was a primary reason for the continued bypassing of opium poppy as a viable coping strategy.

- Responsibility to act with consideration of benefits to the wider community effects cultivation levels – in Central provinces, this was considered through their responsibility to the international community; in Nangarhar this was considered at lesser level –nationalism; in Balkh and Kandahar Provinces there was no consensus of a responsibility to the community.
 - Nationalism and the concept of supporting the formation of unified Afghanistan, was only important for residents of Nangarhar Province, at the opposite end of the spectrum were the residents of Kandahar who were completely disassociated from the concept of a unified Afghanistan.
- The role, influence and respect that the informal institutions hold within a community effects the level of cultivation. Opium poppy cultivation or non cultivation varies between whether it is a community or individual decision. In Kandahar and Balkh Province the Shura has less influence upon cultivation, and the decision is stated to be an individuals, whereas there is increased respect for these traditional institutions in Nangarhar and Central provinces (in decreasing order), and the community acts together on decisions to cultivate illicit crops.
- Survival (provision of basic needs) – people in Nangarhar that stopped cultivation are now suffering from malnutrition and are willing to resume cultivation to avoid starvation; this is not a consideration in Balkh and Kandahar Provinces where the socio-economic conditions are better (even without opium cultivation); Central Regions utilise their emplaced coping strategies to avoid destitution, despite –generally- having the same jirib/hh size and the same income levels/hh as Nangarhar.
- Some areas have a more violent history versus those that can be motivated by reason; intrinsically related to education levels. Central provinces and Nangarhar both have high education levels in comparison to lesser levels in Balkh and Kandahar Provinces (which are more willing to revert to force).
- Connection and interaction with cultivators - in Balkh Province the affiliation (ethnic and familial) with Southern province cultivators facilitated and promoted cultivation, as did inter-province migration (i.e. from Nangarhar) which increased the cultivating skill base in the province; in Central provinces there is limited connection to cultivating areas, however recent inter-region migration has led to an influx of opium cultivating knowledge. In Kandahar Province the surrounding provinces provide expert knowledge and labour which re-enforces the existing experience. In Nangarhar the areas that have the most experience with opium poppy cultivation are the most inclined to resume cultivation, however, due to the reduction of cultivation levels in other districts of the province, their internal migration has been reduced.
- External pressure from traffickers and traders. Whilst this varies throughout the sampled provinces. The problem of the permeation of traffickers and traders is two fold; firstly, their presence in opium cultivating provinces has long been accepted and secondly, like many recovering war torn countries there are inherent problems that persist in terms of illicit supporters taking advantage of the nascent formal institutional network to promote and increase illegal activities.
- Motivational considerations and reasons for cultivation can not be simplified by the separation of groups into ethnic categories. Ethnic groups vary in their attitude and perceptions about opium poppy cultivation are dependent mainly upon their spatial location and interactions with other ethnic groups. Previously opium poppy was mainly cultivated by Pashtun tribes; however these circumstances are now changing.

3.3. Overall perceptions about opium poppy cultivation levels

- Perceptions about opium poppy cultivation were dependent upon the populaces' antecedent experience of cultivation in conjunction to their cognitive capacity to emulate different motivational stages.
- Of those that cultivated or had experience of cultivation there was a noticeable lack of ownership of responsibility for any detrimental affects that opium poppy cultivation had within Afghanistan, apart from drug addiction; many felt that opium was an international issue.
- Perceptions about who was most vulnerable -nationwide- to cultivate opium poppy varied throughout the provinces, and is dependent upon the interlocutors ability to conceptualise conditions in other parts of the country – removed from their own circumstances:
 - Balkh Province cultivators purported that the most likely to cultivate were those that were not given preferential treatment by the local governance as well as the populations that had no access to jobs or an agricultural support system.
 - Kandahar Province residents expressed the notion that the most vulnerable to cultivate were those that had seen their income levels depreciate due to poor and corrupt governance.
 - Central Region residents believed that the most vulnerable to cultivation were the extremely poor – they could not consider that Muslim people would risk going to *duzakh* (hell) for any other reason.
 - Nangarhar inhabitants felt that those with low jeribs/hh and lack of water were the most vulnerable, as they did not have sufficient land or water to cultivate alternative crops.
- Perceptions about reasons that had facilitated reduced cultivation levels or encouraged non-cultivation, were given as:
 - Greater assistance allocated to those areas,
 - Stronger law enforcement by the provincial and district governors,
 - Lack of antecedent experience of cultivation.
- Perceptions about those who had increased cultivation levels were given as the reverse of above. In addition to this, many felt that an increase was reflective of lack of support for the government, coveting and expectations of the international community being unfulfilled.

3.4. Awareness of the Counter Narcotic campaign: information dissemination

- Whilst the governments and MoCN's aim plan and coordinate activities more effectively at the provincial and district level (an "area based approach") is certainly insightful and necessary it is largely unfulfilled.
- The CN campaigns to inform the public and to enforce the ban have been variable throughout Afghanistan; consequentially the perception about illicit cultivation and the CN edict is variable, dependent upon the information chain, the populaces' education, perspective of the world and their interaction with law enforcement. The variable levels of penetration is reflected in either the positive or negative response in terms of opium cultivation levels:
 - Apart from the Central Region Provinces, all provinces mentioned that district governors had had a meeting with provincial governor to be informed and were then expected to pass this information onto community Shura's and village elders. Variation occurred in:
 - the dates of this meeting,
 - the number of subsequent meeting,

- the involvement of informal institutions,
 - the involvement of MoCN,
 - the subsequent information dissemination,
 - The more pervasive the information dissemination, and subsequent involvement of the villages, the more effective the CN campaign; people from Nangarhar were the best informed and their representatives – from all levels of formal and informal institutions – had contemporary updating meetings.
 - In Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces there was rotation of district officials and assertion of the fact that district officials would be removed from posts if cultivation levels were not positively affected; this had blatantly had variable effect.
 - Central provinces gleaned their information about the ban through media sources.
 - All provinces were aware of the CN eradication campaigns.
 - Awareness of the other legal actionable consequences of breaching the ban was variable throughout the provinces. Provinces that had experienced visible resolve to enforce of all aspects of the ban experienced the greatest decrease.
- The public information CN campaign is at present mainly directed towards drug addiction – however this does not have a significant motivational impact upon large parts of the nation:
 - Areas that are unfamiliar to growing opium poppy view addiction as the major problem; however, in areas with experience of cultivation they view addiction as being a minor –albeit negative- consideration in comparison to the benefits, (believing that addiction is mainly an issue for those who migrated for work externally). (N.B. caution should be taken in interpretation of this, as there is such a large stigma attached to addiction that households are reluctant to admit its occurrence.)
- The effectiveness of Counter Narcotics Campaigns are dependant upon the positive compliance of the populace and this is in turn is dependant upon a change in the people's psyche from its present level:
 - The removal of opium as the major rural income will only be achieved if you manage to create a sense of nationalism and faith in the present governmental structure; nation building requiring collective ownership of the problems; concept of society – expanding upon the concept of tribal rule.
 - Fostering the mentality of self sufficiency – previously the people were resilient and tough, but now due to the fatigue of prolonged turbulence and insecurity combined with phases of aid, their self sufficiency has been lowered in areas that used opium cultivation as a main coping strategy; this self sufficiency needs to be enhanced.
- CN public information stickers and posters were most pervasive and visible in areas where governmental officials and informal institution members had distributed them rather than where external NGO's were solely responsible.
- The CN campaign had often perpetuated misunderstanding and provided misinformation, often distributed by governmental authorities (provincial and district governors, MoRRD etc) that farmers will receive compensation; ALP projects will be an elixir to all financial ailments; no concept of timescale is expressed resulting in an expectancy of immediate results - the fact that many ALP had long term objectives was not explained by the officials in their desire to exact high and positive responses to the ban.
- The CN campaign had failed to squash information contrary to the CN laws objectives; all provinces were cognizant of the Senlis Council's proposal.
- In an economic climate where illicit trade provides such a large proportion of a household's income, the best way to influence the people is through a comprehensive information campaign as well as understanding the specific psychological make-ups of

the vulnerable indigenous population. However, certain vulnerabilities and deficiencies exist in the present national information campaign; Counter Narcotics strategies are not developed and directed specifically towards the target audience (TA):

- The campaigns do not maximise upon any inclinations/factors that would induce willingness to adhere to the ban.
 - The information campaign is only directed towards those with any significant history of growing there is no attempt to try to advance or alter opinions of those who did not grow before – this could be counter-productive as it is totally dependant upon the continuity of present coping strategies in areas of non opium cultivation, a concept which is flawed as most people from non opium producing provinces are aware of the assistance offered to other provinces that grow opium, consequentially the law abiding provinces are beginning to feel penalised.
 - Interlocutors are unable to understand the nexus between OMF, corruption in government and the consequential destabilization of Afghanistan. All of which are key themes that people identified as circumstances that they want to be improved.
 - The absence of prosecutions or any stigmatization of warlords and militia commanders. All farmers mentioned the insufficient attention is given to the role of traffickers and traders – for an industry that is notoriously more beneficial for the wealthier with the poorer being more penalised, the present lack of attention to this portion of the problem only exacerbates the situation of the poor, as well as their inclination to abide to the law.
- The GoA and MoCN has failed to invest funds in numerous key areas that they declared that funds would be assigned to, such as Governance and Community Development, Rural Financing and Poppy Debt and the Provision of social safety nets. The Counter Narcotics Trust Fund is not utilized, and most of the populace are ignorant of its existence. There was limited or no indication or acknowledgement of the existence of provincial development plans, district development Shura or community development councils.
 - PEP and MoCN roles are not clear and their CN efforts are often deemed counter productive.
 - PEP was unable to play a major role in this years cultivation season, as they have only recently started operations and at the time of fieldwork lacked sufficient information.

3.5. Alternative Livelihood Projects and assistance

- Assistance needs vary throughout different regions – dependent upon the mentality of the people, on and off farm income, climatic and agricultural variations, as well as access to infrastructure and antecedent support systems.
- Assistance and the development of alternative livelihoods are seen as pre-requisites - in those provinces that are presently cultivating opium poppy – to comply with the ban on opium poppy cultivation. Without ALP the removal of poppy will have to be by force and this will not be sustainable. This realization fostered the formation of bi-lateral and national assistance, however these schemes are frequently not directed towards resolving the negative outlook for future cultivation patterns:
 - ALP priority lists are often perverse. Field interviews and observations highlight a priority list of very different sequencing to that of the ALP. Overall, the lack of water (drinking and irrigation) – creating or exacerbating a shortage of cultivable land- and employment were stated as the top two priorities; these priorities are different to ALP priorities. Whilst ALP are correct to draw attention to the lack of markets and storage these can not override the priority for water-without water there are no crops to store or sell at market. (NB. At

present travelling markets visit each district once a week – a fact which project stakeholders seemed unaware of.)

- More specifically the population's priorities for ALP can be broken down by province into whether they are commercial or subsistence based – a reflection of the prevailing economic situations of the areas as well as the presence/lack of self initiated coping strategies.
- ALP are failing to meet their initial objectives; to accelerate licit economic growth and business activity and to provide immediate alternative sources of income to people who have been dependent upon opium production. The main alternative crops grown in areas where ALP is active are subsistence not commercial, whereas in areas of extended non cultivation they cultivate commercial crops.
- Attention should be paid to the locations of ALP. At present there is a tendency for aid to be concentrated along infrastructure in areas which already have good access to land and water and are close to main markets and central administration, (there is a correlation between those who already have the most and those who are receiving the most ALP). ALP adhere to an assessment of the most vulnerable which concentrates on landless, women and disabled, they do not consider access to water –an essential consideration in a prolonged drought period, as seen through numerous examples around the world where drought is a major precursory risk to famine. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that in Nangarhar, the areas that have received the least assistance – the distal mountainous zone- are at present the main cultivating group.
- Attention should be paid to the opinions and experiences of the indigenous populations (more so than is done at present). Examples of poorly thought through ALP and assistance schemes were omnipresent i.e. tens of hectares of orchards dying due to lack of water, land used for one crop of oranges that locals would like to use for three crops of wheat for over 1,000 people, insufficient fertiliser (miscalculations!), poor quality seed delivered at incorrect times of year, production levels surpassing the expectations of NGO's consequentially resulting in failure to comply with promises to purchase crops.
- National programme assistance is failing to tackle key motivational reasons for poppy cultivation – such as access to credit etc.
- Central Governments role is viewed as minor.
- Key Governmental institutions (such as the MoA) have limited influence or inclusion on ALP, despite having extensive experience and knowledge in the specific regions.
- The Ministry of Counter Narcotics role is minimal; the provincial offices are not proactive and there is no evidence of the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund being fully utilised or operational.
- Government owned land and industries not being utilized properly – on variable scales in different provinces there exists biased loaning of government land and/or no rehabilitation of government owned industries (i.e. the olive factory in Nangarhar; the cotton factories in both Central Regions and Balkh Province).
- The public's awareness of specific NGO's that have been active in their regions and of optimistic stories of success is extremely limited. (There are limited campaigns to inform the population through informal institutions.)

- Assistance in Central provinces by national programmes and NGO's is low, but because no promises were made to the people – national or international – there is no disillusionment and aid is more graciously accepted than in other provinces.
 - There is insufficient attention focused on building upon existing coping strategies in Central regions.
- The greatest successes have been in the increase in number of schools and clinics (although quality of teachers and doctors is often questioned) and the pervasive provision of generators by NSP (although complaints were made about lack of funds the fuel).

3.6. Impact of ALP and assistance upon farmers decisions in regards to opium poppy cultivation

- Overall the lack of tangible benefits has meant that ALP or assistance considerations played only a minor role in opium poppy cultivation risk decisions; recognition of the overall influx of assistance money was stated, but residents feel that the field work is incongruous with the amount dedicated.
- The promised impact of ALP or assistance was crucial to the reductions in Nangarhar Province.
- Failure to comply with ALP and assistance promises will be crucial in increases in cultivation levels throughout the country.
- Those provinces that have been promised less assistance, place more responsibility on the governments role.
- Amongst the populace there exists no concept of the immense scale of the tasks necessary to rehabilitate and improve rural conditions.
- In the future the impact of ALP and assistance promises will play a reduced role within the risk decisions in regards to opium poppy cultivation, unless projects are more pervasive and tangible.

3.7. Consequences of variable levels of opium poppy cultivation

- In Central Regions where non-cultivation of opium poppy prevails, there are no major consequences of non cultivation due to the longevity of coping strategies (and the consequent contentment with their lot), this is despite comparable socio-economic circumstances to other presently cultivating areas.
- The main consequences of a decrease in opium poppy cultivation, has been increased social and economic vulnerability:
 - Reduced income and increased debt levels; poverty,
 - Exacerbation of the consequences of drought,
 - Reduced expenditure on consumables, leading to malnutrition,
 - Increased incidences of permanent migration; change in community structure,
 - Loss of labour days; leading to more attention focused on the lack of employment in the province,
 - Loss of access to credit,
 - Increased discontent amongst all levels of informal and formal society structures; especially directed towards international assistance providers,
 - Potential instability, and increased resolve to forcefully resist eradication.
- The positive consequences of a decrease in opium poppy cultivation has been increased pride in their ability adhere to Islamic teachings and their adherence to the rule of law.
- The main consequences of a increase in opium cultivation, have been viewed as positive:

- Increase in income and subsequent perceived improvement to the standard of living,
 - Debt levels are lower in cultivating households.
- The negative consequences of an increase in opium poppy cultivation were viewed as being the:
 - Further perpetuation of the concept of opium poppy cultivation as the only viable coping strategy; further incorporation into business systems and the populations psyche,
 - Impact upon addiction levels.
- Factors which have remained relatively constant or are only partially affected by opium poppy cultivation fluctuations:
 - Sharecropping still exists even without opium; land tenure and rotations in Afghanistan are complicated.
 - Temporary migration outside of the opium cultivating provinces has increased, but temporary migration is not purely a response to reduced or non cultivation. Migration for work on opium poppy fields or other labour (especially construction) has been an emplaced coping strategy throughout recent history; inter-district, inter-province (often to main cities) or internationally (Iran and Pakistan).
 - Comparable to community structures household structures have remained relatively constant; apart from an increase in temporary migration for work – especially of young males. If women worked on the fields previously they still do and vice versa. (N.B. Obviously village structures are changing in response to the increase in permanent migration.)

3.8. The future of opium poppy cultivation

- The **future adherence to or breach of the CN ban will fluctuate through time**, dependent upon the specific psychologies of the people and the subsequent motivational considerations that they incorporated into their initial socio-economic risk decisions, all of which will be **exacerbated by**:
 - Deterioration of the **security situation**,
 - **Resentment towards the government**; at all levels,
 - Continuation of **drought** conditions,
 - **Lack of assistance and ALP**.

4. Recommendations

There are two main recommendations that have been formulated from the findings of this research.

4.1. Regionalization

- Due to the multitude of diverse area specific considerations that are incorporated into the indigenous populations risk decisions in regards to opium poppy cultivation, it is suggested that a more decentralized approach is required for future CN strategies. Strategies would be more effective if they were directed more specifically to the populace inhabiting a particular area. It is proposed that these regional approaches should be based upon the map on page 26. The proposed regions are not defined by either international military stages or the present UN regional delimitations, but instead, they are based upon a mixture of social, economic, security, opium poppy cultivation, climatic and agricultural zone considerations. Only through consideration of specific motivational issues in regards to relative opium poppy cultivation will a sustainable reduction be achieved; to address motivational psychologies the aforementioned criteria must be considered on a far lesser and more directed scale than is presently in operation.

For regions defined as A-E the following recommendations apply:

- It would be prudent for regionally responsible officers to co-ordinate and monitor all CN activities in their areas; eradication (PEP and governor led), assistance (ALP, national and bilateral), information campaigns and overall monitoring of corruption, trafficking etc. A key finding of this paper has been the lack of cohesion undermining the efficacy of all aspects of Afghanistan's fight against opium poppy cultivation, it is suggested that the appointment of a regional officer would make some desperately needed progress to unify the array of efforts presently in operation.
 - Both national and international actors should be obliged to function in conjunction with this officer, who in the role of head of the hierarchical structure for CN in that region would be able to gather, process, store and utilize data in a more meaningful manner than is presently achieved.
 - The CNTF should be divided to each areas regional officer's office to achieve realistic goals set by an outside authority.
- The regionalization of CN campaigns will facilitate specific public awareness campaigns highlighting issues pertinent to the specific TA – themes that are most likely to encourage positive participation (those that will have the most impact upon the Afghan psyche) in the goal to reduce opium poppy cultivation. Themes that should be promoted include:
 - Promotion of the positivity of the ban –understandable by the TA:
 - Illicit cultivation will hinder the progression and development of a stable Islamic country. The nexus of opium, destabilization and insecurity causes retardation of Afghanistan's development; hindering the provision of:
 - Educational facilities,
 - Non-corrupt governance,
 - Health facilities,
 - Infrastructure,
 - Development of a progressive economy that can provide alternative and more socially acceptable incomes,

- International investment and consequent employment opportunities,
 - The future of Afghanistan as unified and representative country.
 - The necessity of an accurate and pervasive information campaign is also crucial to correcting the misunderstandings surrounding the CN issue in Afghanistan. Such as:
 - The national media's attention and the populace's subsequent pervasive awareness of the Senlis Council's suggestion of legalization of opium poppy cultivation,
 - The perception that assistance is made available mainly for those who break the law by cultivating, with those not cultivating being penalized,
 - The non-cultivation of opium poppy -whilst endorsed by the international community, - is an Afghan initiative, run by a government cognizant of the circumstances surrounding its cultivation.
 - The reformed information campaign must also inform the populace about the facilities available to support non cultivation, such as:
 - The CNTF,
 - International assistance,
 - National programmes,
 - The coping strategies and management of resources of other non-cultivating provinces within their region that have similar conditions, it may be advisable to hold regional workshops - utilizing the Afghan inclination for jirgas- to discuss issues affecting its' people so as to arrive at beneficial conclusions.
 - The style of the campaign must adhere to easily understandable representations, for example Mullah Nasruddin anecdotes are pervasive throughout the country and allow even the illiterate masses to comprehend circumstances and situations.
- CN campaigns must never operate in isolation; juxtaposed with a reformed and more specifically directive and informative CN campaign it is also necessary to provide civic education – so as to promote a sense of ownership and responsibility. (This should build upon schemes such as those initiated by UNAMA and other agencies.) It can not be expected that people will remove a main coping strategy - one of the few continuous factors in their lives during the past 30 years- with flippant disregard, they need to be instructed and informed about the new and improved possibilities and the concept that peace and stability is helping to build a nation that they as citizens have a responsibility to help progress, so as to return their country to a prosperous state within the model of a united Afghanistan.
 - Different civic education approaches should be provided for each age group:
 - Older persons should be informed/educated via the mullah during his Friday speech (*Waz* or *Khutba*) or through discussions with the Malik, Shura or village elders.
 - Children (potentially the most beneficial of the policy) must have the notion of citizenship and their role in building a country of their future instilled in them at school. Whilst the attention paid to children, will not aid the levels of opium poppy cultivation for the short term future, it will broaden their capacity to conceptualise the gravity and scale of consequences of opium poppy cultivation that many of their parents will not be able to immediately relate to. Campaigns should be intrinsically national –following the national curriculum. Opium should not be a prime topic in classes, but rather can be used as a negative example of numerous detrimental circumstances for the

- present circumstances in their country as well as their countries place and responsibility in the world.
- Psychological approaches to attaining and maintaining the required changes in the Afghan psyche necessitate that CN goals are clearly and concisely conveyed to the populace:
 - Every household should have a constant reminder of the decree. Ideally a system should be considered where communities sign a document (crucial and binding in Afghan psyche and society; it is a matter of great shame to break such a promise - *Wada Khelaafi*) advocating their compliance to the ban in exchange for ALP or other assistance programmes.
 - To change a person's mindset requires tangible changes in conjunction to an enlightened awareness and a desire for change. ALP and assistance (bi-lateral and national) must develop certain key areas that at present undermine their effectiveness;
 - Greater co-ordination and exchange of information between ALP and assistance programme stakeholders.
 - ALP must readdress their campaigns; they are not reaching the most vulnerable.
 - Attention should be focused on undoing the damage of the unrealistic expectations of the people in regards to the pervasiveness of ALP and assistance; this should be addressed through an information campaign of the present achievements as well as ensuring the development of a highly proactive consultative approach, as well as informing the people of the enormity of the task assisting a rural community that consists of between 33-40,000 villages.
 - When devising ALP and assistance strategies attention should be drawn onto what differences are apparent when comparison to 1978 is made (when the country was on the verge of self sufficiency).
 - A caveat is expressed that is it necessary to run CN campaigns in all areas of Afghanistan (regions A-E, as defined by the map on page 26) irrespective of antecedent cultivation levels, so as to undermine any potential threat posed by migration (permanent or temporary) from opium poppy cultivating areas. It is also essential that those who have never cultivated opium poppy are not excluded from receiving high assistance levels. In addition to this, non-cultivating areas should be praised for their self reliant ability to develop licit coping strategies.
 - To ensure that CN campaigns experience greater success in the future than in the recent years, it is essential that certain governmental actions are taken:
 - To sustain motivation and to ensure maximum applicability, there must be regular reviews of the NDCS; it is advocated that the NDCS must be reviewed prior to the next scheduled reviewed date in January 2008.
 - It is essential that the NDCS sets out clear targets, so that those involved know what they are aiming towards – an aim can not be achieved without a clear goal; it should not be assumed that relapse or failure to achieve all stated goals would mean total strategy failure, but rather would facilitate investigation, improved understanding and more realistic amendments, ultimately creating a more realistically sustainable and adaptive strategy.
 - The confusion over the roles of PEP teams and the MoCN should be clarified; and improved co-ordination developed.
 - Provincial MoCN offices are active on variable scales – often citing funding limitations as being restrictive. These facilities would conceptually fall under the direction of the Regional Officer (proposed above), who should employ them more vigorously in the campaign; even if this just involves information campaigns and village consultancies, this will keep the authoritative presence and the seriousness of the enforcement and compliance to the ban fresh within the minds of farmers, allow the farmers to access contemporary information,

facilitate awareness about what issues are most important to the populace in specific areas, as well as resourcefully employing MoCN employees.

- The CN Criminal Justice Task Force should be more proactive towards those that disregard or sabotage the CN campaign; there is a necessity for a more visible approach to break up the heroin processing and trafficking networks. The indigenous populace are aware of the 'mark up' made further up the drug hierarchy, but they are not aware of any negative repercussions for any group apart from the already disadvantaged farmers.
- The governmental officers must tangibly enforce the ban; every aspect of the legal consequences should be made apparent to the people and the governments resolve to enforce it; without repercussions the ban is deemed inconsequential.
- The government (through the aforementioned regional officer) should utilize and regulate the involvement of formal and informal institutions in the CN campaigns:
 - Regular high profile briefings should be attended by all key institutional (formal and informal) members involved in CN campaigns; with information propagated through these persons to all levels of society.
 - Provincial and district level officials must be proactive in there involvement with NGO's and government funded assistance campaigns in there regions.
 - People cognizant and indigenous to the region (both formal and informal) should be encouraged to partake in the development of specific CN strategies.

For regions defined as F the following recommendations apply:

- It can be deduced from the map on page 26 that the Southern zone (F) is viewed as distinctive to the other areas in Afghanistan. The Southern zone encloses provinces that are presently cultivating (based upon 2005 figures) about 53% of the total land area in Afghanistan upon which opium poppy is cultivated. These provinces were incorporated into one area based upon the security situation, the interconnected nature of their opium trafficking, similarity of the indigenous mentality as well as comparable agro-climatic situations.
 - The opium poppy industry is heavily entrenched and interlinked within the Southern provinces; all Southern markets are interconnected via oligarchical/syndicate organized crime structures; there is a ready exchange of cultivation improvements and advancements –such as improved seeds; the regions off farm income is heavily dependent upon migration within Southern opium poppy cultivating provinces for lancing and weeding; there is also an extended tradition of cultivation in many Southern provinces fostering the permeation of opium poppy in all aspects of life -it is totally entrenched in the indigenous psyche.
 - The inclusion of Nimroz and Farah within the Southern zone, despite having comparatively lesser production levels than other provinces, is based upon the assertion of the increasingly important status of these provinces as transit routes to the Western markets through Iran and Turkey to Europe. In the 2005 UNODC opium survey, it was noted that there was an increase in trafficking to Iran in preference to routes to Pakistan, (leading to Iran dominating Afghanistan's trafficking of opium – 60%).
- It is advocated that the focus in the Southern region (F) must be centred upon re-enforcing the security situation rather than extensive CN campaigns; security is a pre-requisite for adherence to government edicts. All the defined Southern provinces experience insecurity (on variable scales of severity and depreciation) due to AGF

activities; many residents of the Southern provinces view a correlatable increase in opium poppy cultivation as one consequence of the decreased security conditions. Without a more stable and secure environment:

- There is no realistic potential to implement the rule of law in regards to opium poppy cultivation.
- The region will remain too unstable to be receptive and consequentially to benefit totally from ALP or other assistance programmes. It should be noted that despite the fact that Farah, Hilmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan are four of the ten priority bilateral assistance provinces, due to the security situation limited projects have come to fruition (UNODC, 2005a).
- Organized crime is infiltrating the social systems more and more; debilitating licit economies.
- Attention and financial focus would be better draw on those areas of Afghanistan that have a shorter connection to opium cultivation before it becomes too entrenched in the mindset and accepted as a viable coping strategy.
- A culmination of factors has led to a highly charged anti-governmental attitude of the indigenous populace. Until the area can be stabilized enough for assistance and development to be considered within the populaces' opium poppy risk decisions, it will not be possible to sway their highly negative perceptions about government at all levels as being 'corrupt and unrepresentative'.
- The author advocates that whilst CN campaigns should be tempered in the Southern region (F), it is essential that the military runs conjunctive PsyOps campaigns (a form of civic education), to help orchestrate a positive change in mentalities of the people – that hopefully will facilitate a future reduction of opium poppy cultivation in the South. These campaigns should be formulated with the intention of the eventual implementation of the rule of law, and consequentially the CN law by highlighting the anticipated success in other regions of the country through their culminative adherence to the edict and their faith in the government and a unified Afghanistan:
 - Highlight that the international military forces are fighting a war in the South, whereas in more Northern areas of Afghanistan, the international and national efforts are building a stable country where peace, education and prosperity rule and consequentially benefit and will propel the residents of those localities. In an area which has psychological tendencies for secondary phase motivational psychologies, encompassing highly business minded and covetous natures this approach will appeal to the sensitivities of zone F residents.
 - Build upon areas of the public's disenchantment with AGF i.e. utilize the concept that Taliban are forcing the closure of clinics and schools and that their terror campaigns are prohibiting rehabilitation; the Southern Province residents are experiencing angst due to the closure of schools, believing that 'education is light and essential for progression' and frequently quoting the Afghan proverb, that 'if you close the schools for one year, then you send the country back 100 years'.
 - Promotion of the government, in conjunction to tangible changes, such as the rotation of officials in the Southern provinces – as many are heavily implicated in the perpetuation of the opium industry.

Delineation of proposed regions for targeted counter-narcotics campaigns in Afghanistan

Delineation of proposed regions for targeted counter-narcotics campaigns in Afghanistan



Source: UNODC Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey 2006
Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

4.2 Nangarhar

Nangarhar's success is compulsory for the future success of the CN campaigns in Afghanistan.

- Immediate relief is required in Nangarhar to curb the wave of re-cultivation – this should be in conjunction with an information campaign that highlights the concept that people should not lose faith. (Do not misguide the people; tell them that there is an acknowledgement that strategies have not had as much effect as intended and that these are being resolved.) Without the removal of hunger and starvation it will not be possible for the population to maintain a focus driven by secondary and tertiary motivational psychologies, - considering concepts such as social betterment and responsibility rather than a purely primary motivational focus that is dominated purely by consideration of survival and basic needs.
- Nangarhar should be an exemplary province (setting a precedent) in the Counter Narcotics Campaign; failure to capitalize on the willingness of people in Nangarhar to adhere to the law undermines the future of all Counter Narcotics programmes in Afghanistan. Rewards for their efforts must be more tangible; there is a risk that without strong support of those that desist in cultivation word will spread to other opium producing regions that non-cultivation is almost penalized through the lack of provision of pervasive and sustainable alternatives. If cultivation in Nangarhar resumes then it will be increasingly difficult to rectify the mindset for future interventions and management of opium cultivation in Nangarhar and other provinces that are observing the fate of Nangarhar with interest.

Factors which make Nangarhar's success so essential:

- It is an exemplary province in terms of its high antecedent opium poppy cultivation figures and its willingness to decrease; it has the potential to be used as an inspirational example.
- The populations' willingness to decrease shows commendable faith in the new government and observation of the rule of law- a fact which the government should reward and encourage; only when the government is supported will its laws and the consequent nation building truly take effect. Only a few groups in Afghanistan support the government as pervasively as those people in Nangarhar. In a country that is notorious for its ethnic divides and factionalism, failure to attain rule of law in an area that puts such faith and support in the government portrays a negative picture for obtaining the rule of law in lesser supportive, more socially dislocated areas. It should also be noted that the compliance last year (2005) of the Khogyani tribe (which are infamously aggressive and have cultivated opium poppy for centuries) was critical to highlight to a notoriously resilient and self-reliant nation, that even within a remote tribal area in which the authority of the provincial government is more negotiated than absolute, reduction was possible. However the failure to maintain this tribes' resolve to suppress cultivation is key to setting the tone for many remote areas where traditional systems still have more influence than the central government. Also of note is the fact that Nangarhar district areas are –on a national scale- small and hence facilitate more pervasive authority of the governmental institutions operating within in them, comparative to other provinces.
- The security situation in Nangarhar has improved considerably and AGF activity has been considerably dissipated. (The conjunctive provisions of large numbers of ANP and ANA and Coalition Forces as well as the intolerance of Nangarharis towards insurgency have been some of the factors for this improved condition.) This points to two conclusions; firstly, that if rule of law can not be implemented in relatively secure localities then this proffers a bleak scenario for progressing the rule of law in those areas presently experiencing security problems; secondly, if it is not perceived by the populace that improved security will facilitate beneficial assistance activities -if they

desist to cultivate,- then it can not be expected that the populace will utilize this as a motivation to act to oppose AGF active in their localities, in fact this may result in a detrimental opposite effect.

- Nangarhar's (often referred to as 'The garden of Afghanistan') agricultural potential is vast, due to large areas of fertile and well irrigated land; failure to persuade people with such resources available to them to cultivate alternative crops makes it inconceivable that it will be possible to convince the populations that inhabit and rely upon rain fed agricultural systems in remote mountainous or plain areas.
- Nangarhar contains some of the most educated people in the country; if you can not persuade the most intellectual members of society to decrease cultivation then this paints a bleak picture for persuading the illiterate masses that often do not consider wider ranging consequences of their actions outside of their most immediate needs. Nangarhar people have the cognizant capacity to adjust quickly and hence proper implementation of ALP would propagate more rapidly than in other provinces, allowing Nangarhar to be used as an exemplary province of the beneficial environment that could be constructed if people are willing to compromise on their opium poppy cultivation levels.

5. Provincial Findings

5.1. Nangarhar Province

Nangarhar Province is located to the East of Kabul, along one of the main trade routes to the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. Covering an area of 7616 km² it has a 420km border with Pakistan (providing numerous points of entry into Afghanistan). Nangarhar is a combination of fertile irrigated (*abi*) plain watered by the Kabul and Kunar rivers, and peripheral plain and mountainous areas solely dependent upon snow melt and rain fed (*lalmi*) stream systems. The province has an extensive history of agricultural production – ‘The garden of Afghanistan’ – taking advantage of the areas Mediterranean climate and irrigation canal systems (emplaced by previous governments and the Soviets) and natural spring irrigation (*karez*), which has previously aided bi-annual, and sometimes tri-annual cropping patterns. However, since 1992 the water situation has been deteriorating in Nangarhar (synonymous with the whole of Afghanistan); there are more occasions of drought, the water table is falling, and there is less precipitation, (shortage of water is most prevalent in the districts located along the Spinghar Mountains – which provide the physical international boundary). The drought further exacerbates the provinces low jerib/hh status (average jerib size/hh is 1 -some of the lowest in the country), which is a consequence of the dividing of land via progenies, increasing population pressures and Soviet land segmentation (based upon the concept of egalitarianism). (Large areas of the most fertile land are government owned ‘farms’ – a Soviet constructed system.) Despite the relative fertility of large areas of Nangarhar, the low jerib/hh has acted to subdue the levels of income/hh, which are amongst some of the lowest in Afghanistan.

Nangarhar Province has traditionally been within the top two opium producing provinces in Afghanistan (alternating between first and second position with Hilmand Province); however in 2005, poppy cultivation decreased sharply from 28, 213ha to 1,093ha, a massive reduction of - 96%, (UNODC, 2005b). In 2006 although some farmers in remote areas have resumed extensive cultivation the majority of the villagers have not cultivated poppy. In addition to the history of opium poppy cultivation in the area – which varies on a district level from around ten to two hundred years – Nangarhar has also been a major international opium trade centre; with major opium markets located in Shinwar and Achin, with much trade into Pakistan especially with traders in Bajaur (these opium markets and smaller ones in other districts have now been destroyed).

Following the fall of the Taliban (2001) the area organized itself under the direction of Haji Qadir (later assassinated) and re-established the Eastern Shura tribal council based in Jalalabad (Nangarhar’s provincial centre, the largest city in the East and fifth largest nationally) composed of tribal elders, community leaders, professors, Imams and merchants. Since then, there has been a progressive movement towards a province controlled by the rule of law, and as mentioned above peace and stability has re-entered daily life in many areas.

Nangarhar has received a lot of international attention and aid in comparison to other areas due to a combination of factors, which include antecedent opium poppy growing levels, the security situation and accessibility from Kabul. Nangarhar is one of the seven key bilateral priority provinces. Nangarhar Province has had more funds committed for ALP than any other province - 70millionUSD (14%) - as well as considerable rural development projects and national programmes, such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) lead by MoRRD, (UNODC, 2005b).

The recent and massive decrease in opium poppy cultivation, in conjunction with the improved security situation and the extensive ALP activities ensure that Nangarhar is an exemplary and

crucial location for investigations into causative factors for fluctuations and variations in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

5.1.2 Characteristics and cultural considerations for the people of Nangarhar Province

The people of Nangarhar are renowned for their intelligence and adaptability; being one of the most educated and progressive groups within Afghanistan. They are strongly traditional (*rawaj*) in their values, but relatively peaceful in comparison to other areas in the country.

The education levels of the populace in Nangarhar are amongst some of the highest within the country a fact which other provinces in Afghanistan are cognizant of –especially the fact that Nangarhar had some of the first schools in Afghanistan. Education is highly important to the people of Nangarhar and this attitude facilitates a responsible, enlightened and tolerant approach to life that is lacking in many other parts of the country. Residents stated that the importance emplaced upon education is a repercussion of the low jerib/hh sizes in Nangarhar which has meant that betterment has always been controlled by off-farm opportunities and as such, education was seen as a means to progress away from the relatively poor social and economic situation found in the province; a repercussion of which has been large proportions of people from Nangarhar holding governmental positions. Education is consequentially an important consideration for all levels of society in Nangarhar and even the poorest villages try not to withhold children from school even when there is a need for their labour to help family survival (i.e. collecting firewood and herding grazing cattle). Whilst there is some variation in the level of education throughout the province - with proximity to Jalalabad being a key determinant, - it is notable that all villagers questioned, mentioned that their children attended evening classes in addition to school. The inhabitants benefit from the relatively high density of the population, meaning that schools are more accessible.

The higher education levels in Nangarhar - and the consequent ability to learn - has facilitated a progressive and innovative population, that whilst being highly traditional and controlled are highly capable of adapting to new circumstances. This is most obviously highlighted in the recent examples of new industries and agricultural skills developed in the area after repatriation from Pakistan; during their time in exile many learnt new skills which they are now able to adapt and utilise within Nangarhar to improve their own circumstances. This concept of adapting to new circumstances and learning from the experience of others is also seen by their desire not to re-enact the detrimental consequences of drug addiction that was conspicuous whilst in Pakistan. This pattern of adjustments with the ultimate goal of betterment is seen throughout the history of Nangarhar and the people proudly recount how during the British invasion about 200 years ago (19th Century) roads were not constructed to the provinces due to the assumption that enemies would use these to attack, however the Nangaraharis responded quickly to the invaders withdrawal constructed some of the first roads in Afghanistan.

The progressive, reasoned and adaptive attitude of the populace has lead to great pride within the community about their province (more so than any other area of investigation). They view their role within Afghanistan as that of chief actors in diplomacy and tolerance; perceiving their province as exemplary in terms of superior law and governance. This attitude which was most recently fostered by their role in ending violent factionalism amongst disparate Mujahideen groups - through a serious of jirga's in Jalalabad - after the Soviet retreat, has lead them to consider the fate of Afghansitan as a whole and consequentially they feel a responsibility towards the entire nation and are fierce advocates of the concept of nationalism (highlighting a key third motivational psychological stage), seeing their role as intellectual peace keepers. The populace consider Nangarhar as the 'Gateway to Kabul' and consequentially they have a role to

defend their nations capital from internal and external attacks. The residents of Nangarhar are quick to disassociate themselves from more factional, violent and less diplomatic tendencies of other groups within Afghanistan - especially the Southern Pashtun's – preferring instead, to conform to the ideal of peace and tranquillity, not wishing for outsiders to penetrate their beloved province but also to live a peaceful non intrusive life; 'Peace is better than fighting' (*Solh is khair*). Whilst some distal tribes are renowned for their violence (Kogani, Shinwar and Pachirwa tribes) the majority of the populace feel great shame by the presence of unrest, as well weak government which in the past allowed the propagation of warlords to control business. The indigenous desire for a representative, peaceful and socially responsive community is reflected through all levels of the populace psyche being most clearly highlighted by the pride and appreciation that is shown towards their environment. Nangarhar's populace are grateful for the resources and privileged agricultural, climatic, and geographical conditions of the province – this is despite the fact that jerib size/hh and access to water is below the national average throughout most of the province. Constant reference was made that Nangarhar is Afghanistan's 'bracelet of flowers' and when drought conditions abate it will return to being a 'heaven'. This ingrained appreciation of their circumstances as well as the overall desire to live in harmony and to perpetuate their status within Afghanistan as some of the most respected and intelligent communities is key to their motivational psychologies which firmly operate within the third category and facilitates a progressive and optimistic perspective.

A combination of contentment and pride in both the social and environmental basis of life in Nangarhar as well as an intellectual and reasoned understanding that through community support the country will regain it's 'prosperous' pre 1980's conditions, has been fostered by the populace's long term focus (the most comprehensively long term and optimistic of all the groups questioned in regards to the future of the country). This long term optimism is in part a reflection of the overwhelming support and faith that is emplaced upon the nascent government. They feel a strong political affiliation to Kabul politicians (many of whom used to have second homes in Nangarhar), as well as the connection drawn from the large number of Nangarharis in respected positions of authority. The populace respect their intellectuals and so foresee that their actions whilst in government will be considered and appropriate and consequentially the long term result will be beneficial. This high level of faith that is emplaced in those persons of power is unique within Afghanistan and is a function of the populaces' ability to conceptualize non-immediate results as well as a traditional approach to life which denotes that individuals should show respect for people of authority and rank.

The significance of the traditional approach to life is reflected in the importance that the people emplace upon the informal institutional hierarchy and the respect that they show towards it divisions. More so than other areas studied the inhabitants of Nangarhar approach life with traditional values and the role of informal institutions carry considerable sway within the community. All decisions are made on a community level through the advise of the Shura and Malik. Within many areas the respect and adherence to the rules advocated by informal institutions is comparable if not greater than that given to formal institution edicts. Notably the tribes that have the highest respect for elders are also the most violent and non-conformist to government laws - Shinwar and Khogyani and especially the three subgroups; Wazir, Kharbonai, Shirzad. The more distal the community the greater the level of importance that is placed upon informal institutions.

However it should be noted that despite their adherence to traditional values, there is a marked shift from prominence of 'Allah will provide' food. (*Khudawand Roozi Medehad*) Malik, Shura and Mullah (Mullah meant to be top, but now most people refer to Shura). Their Islamic beliefs and behaviour have often been tempered and distorted by cultural values that are sometimes at odds with Islam. Would prefer technology levels to go up and religious fanaticism to go down – moderate but devout.

The most negative quality that was conspicuous throughout field work was jealousy and coveting – despite this being contrary to preaching's in Quran. This is a consequence of the constant strive of Nangarharis to better their circumstances as well as certain key codes of the Pashtunwali which has resulted in rivalry between peers and particularly cousins 'taboorwali' has encouraged opium growth due to fear of losing the socio-economic position with their peers. It should however be noted that in comparison to other provinces, covetous tendencies were more afficably dissipated through informal institutions rather than a system of self-perpetuating reprisals.

Whilst the majority of the inhabitants are Pashtun, they co-habit in relative harmony with the Tajek, Pashayee and Arab minorities that adhere and adopt Pashtun approaches to life, most people speak Pashtun as a second language and they have adopted parts if not all of the Pashtunwali. Compared to other provinces they don't have religious fanaticism, and are keen to disassociate their ethos about life and Afghanistan from that of the Southern Pashtun communities. In keeping with the Pashtunwali, the TA has strong loyalty to family and kin groups, defined as lineage (*khel*) and tribe among the majority Pashtuns (about 85%) or clan and ethno-linguistic group among non-tribal peoples (in particular the Pashayee people). Although the Pashtun population of Nangarhar Province is significantly detribalized, they maintain an identity based on their ancestral tribes. Whilst there exists an atmosphere of peace, there are still certain tribes that are renowned for their ferocity – these are mainly border communities- such as Khogyani most violent, most proud to kill – common to have weapons in the South, people that live in mountainous areas traditionally had weapons. The largest tribe in the province is the Khogyani tribe residing in the Western half of the province. However other tribes, describe themselves as being brave (bravery is highly traditional), but not being as antagonistic as these tribes – majority have no desire for weapons. 1989 Opium substitution in Nangarhar failed (Afghanaid, 1989), Shinwari people of Achin most likely to breach contracts, fighting expected if enforcement policy implemented. First project to bring about a reduction. Antecedent conditions show people that aid is not guaranteed or sustained. Not simply tribal (minority groups often have the greatest respect for their elders).

5.1.3 Main reasons for the cessation of opium poppy cultivation

The two overriding reasons for a decrease were stated as being the rule of law – respect for the government and the dedication and honesty of the provincial and district governance- as well as the promises of ALP and assistance to compensate and reward their dedication.

The rule of law and security improvements were proffered by the interlocutors as being crucial changes that had facilitated adherence to the edict. The respect and trust in the Central Government was the highest in Nangarhar of all the areas investigated. Interlocutors made continual reference to the fact that 98% of people in Nangarhar voted for Karzai, and consequentially this show of political affiliation meant that they trust that the rules that his government passes are in the best long term interest of Afghanistan. They consider that as a populace they are responsible for attempting to abide by these laws (including the civil and religious fatwa that was launched against drugs). However, the influence of the provincial governance and the pervasive enforcement of the ban had also been crucial. The provincial government acted astutely to inform governors of their personal responsibility to enforce the rule of law and the ban as well as frequent rotation of governors. The governor is respected for his experience in other areas (the present governor is from Kandahar) and it is widely considered that as a tool to decrease corruption it is seen as a beneficial that the governor is an outsider. The dedication of the police force is also seen as crucial to the reduction – people believed that the police had implemented the ban more forcibly here than elsewhere. (It should be noted that the skill base of the Police officials was considerable, having been trained in drug issues by British government representatives in Kabul, as well as being sent to Iran for training.) This tangible transition from a police and government system where corruption was

endemic was seen by the indigenous populace as a crucial pre-requisite and catalyst for adherence to the ban. People conceptualise that the present enforcement of the poppy ban is a sign of the strengthening of the formal governance and that this needs to be supported if it is to provide a credible governance system where law and social matters are adhered to. Tangible changes in the every day lives of many within Nangarhar due to the improved security situation has also been crucial in its influence of people's perceptions about the future; leading them to contemplate what actions are deemed necessary to perpetuate this as well as it being taken as an example of what the international community can achieve if it sets focus. The populace are astutely cognizant of the pre-requisite conditions necessary for a stable, secure and prosperous future and they hoped that through support of 'Karzai's decree' this would enhance the strength of the law facilitating strong administration throughout Nangarhar which would further improve the security situation and consequentially the standard of living and prospects for the future for themselves and their children.

Of considerable importance was the promises of ALP and economic rejuvenation of the area. There was a firm belief throughout Nangarhar that ALP would replace opium poppy income and many farmers saw their cooperation of non-cultivation as conditional to the delivery of assistance; as without opium poppy there existed no alternative by which to feed their families. The message of development assistance in return for compliance was pervasive – pervading the dialogue at all levels of formal and informal institutions throughout the ban's enforcement. The re-iteration of promises and presence of international assistance providers created an atmosphere of unbridled optimism. The indigenous population were willing to forgo traditional crops and practices and aspire to attain the new skills and utilize the new resources that they had been 'promised'.

The role of the tribal elders and the informal institutions –such as the provincial Shura- was also crucial to the information dissemination and the faith placed in the future promises. Farmers recounted how in the past Maliks and village elders did not advocate anything in regards to opium poppy cultivation, whilst during the bans enforcement they had been pro-actively anti cultivation. This transition in the opinion of the ethnic elders was viewed by the populace as a direct representation of the government's wishes; this carried great sway in Nangarhar which is devoutly traditional in its respect of informal institutions. In a societal structure such as in Nangarhar where communities debate and act as a collective body and are so heavily influenced by informal institutions this lead to conformity over throughout the community of adherence to the CN edict.

Religion also played a part in encouraging and appealing to the psyche of the populace of Nangarhar. Whilst religion was a secondary motivational consideration for the people, it was still important especially when one considers the respect given to informal leaders, and especially religious leaders - Mullahs - within a community. Previously Mullahs and authorities had accepted opium poppy revenues as part of the agricultural tax (*ushr*) which indicated to the locals implicit support for its growth and that it was acceptable or legal (*halal*) within the faith (*emaan*); obviously this has now stopped, presently the Mullahs preach about the illicit status of opium poppy in their Friday speech (*Waz* or *Khutba*). Numerous interviewees mentioned that religion was a secondary reason for cessation of opium poppy cultivation due to it illegal/forbidden status (*haram*), and consequentially involvement with opium would mean they were susceptible to punishment under the Sharia Law. However, care should be taken that this is not over-emphasised, as many people who did not cite religion but declared themselves devote when questioned on the connection between opium and Islam, claimed that they were driven more by the earthly survival instincts of feeding their families. Unfortunately the proverb and associated mentality that 'Allah will provide' has been diminished due to thirty years of war.

Other subsidiary factors that were considered included the fertility of the land as well as the skill base which was expanded upon when repatriation from Pakistan occurred. The nearby city

of Peshawar in Pakistan supports a developed and extensive agricultural economy. Many people mentioned the improved agricultural practices and ideas for new business ventures that had been learnt during their time in Pakistan, such as the brick factories in Surkh Rod. Whilst in many parts of the country, opium poppy is perceived as the only viable coping strategy for returning refugees – to meet immediate financial costs of rehabilitation of both land and houses, (UNODC, 2000) - in the present climate of stability in Nangarhar in conjunction with the fertile land, newly repatriated people had been encouraged to diversify. Such business enterprises had notably attracted transient labourers from historically heavy opium poppy cultivating districts such as Khogyani and Shinwar. Obviously the fertility, antecedent agricultural structure and agrarian opportunities that can be found in Nangarhar were crucial factors in the risk decision process – without the possibility to cultivate other crops, there would have been little opportunity for an opium poppy decrease in an area where employment is so low.

Three minor points that were also mentioned were the necessity for crop rotation, opium economic forces and the international image of the province. Due to the intensive antecedent opium poppy cultivation in conjunction with lower yields in 2004, the people –understanding crop rotational practices- foresaw that there was a need to counter the mineral deficiency. (Afghan soil is rich in Potassium and is mainly alkaline -due to the low rainfall- and so requires either rotation of crops to provide trace elements, phosphorous, potassium, nitrogen or extensive fertilization.) The people viewed the ‘promise’ of alternative agricultural incomes as occurring at a most convenient time within their rotation schedule, increasing the chances of their compliance. In addition to this, attention was also drawn to the slight decrease in opium prices since 2002 when stockpiles increased, resulting in a decrease (especially at farm gate) of the prices. (Caution should be expressed when interpreting this however, as the revenue is still considerably higher than other agricultural products and this factor is not sufficient to have an impact upon cultivation levels in isolation, but rather, was one of a myriad of reasons incorporated in the complex risk decision of the people of Nangarhar). A final motivational point which also played a minor role was the population's desire to be perceived positively (and possibly superior in comparison to other areas of Afghanistan) by international communities. The combination of higher levels of education, resulting in a greater awareness of international communities as well as the tendency of Nangarharis to operate in the third motivational psychological category, meant that they were also motivated by not wanting a negative reputation in the international and especially the Muslim world and consequentially viewed their compliance with the edict as conforming to international desires, hence promoting and endearing themselves to outside communities.

5.1.4 Overall perception about the decrease of opium poppy cultivation

Whilst the people of Nangarhar were all cognisant of the decrease in opium cultivation and were proud of their province's ability to conform to and to set an example to the remainder of Afghanistan, there was however constant re-iteration that they now realized that due to the ‘unfulfilled promises’ of assistance, that the reduction was not sustainable, and that for many re-cultivation was now the only option. The initial impetus that the people had shown and the faith that they had entrusted into the ‘promises’ made to them is now dissipating dramatically; as articulated by the ex-deputy governor of Nangarhar, ‘Without ALP there is no ban’. The people most optimistic about the decrease in opium poppy cultivation were those that inhabited districts with more reliable irrigation and closer proximity to Jalalabad, whilst these communities still intended to endure the consequences of non-cultivation for the foreseeable future, they also perceived that soon survival needs would over rule the luxury of choice.

The indigenous population showed no in depth understanding of why it was necessary to remove cultivation; they just understood that it was law. In their perception opium funds had helped to rehabilitate their land and homes after repatriation; opium money offered them support and the

opportunity to build a future when no other options or offers were available. They consider the desire and necessity for a decrease to be an international wish that will not directly benefit them; they have no comprehension of any nexus between opium, destabilization, corruption and AGF. Some persons (including the Provincial Shura) expressed great confusion and disenchantment as they perceived that the Coalition Forces were aiding some drug dealers, while the neediest were being penalized by the removal of a 'reliable' income that has been available to them on varying scales for in excess of a hundred years.

Most farmers understand through the downward information chain of the inimical consequences of opium in terms of drug abuse; however many view this as a problem of the foreigners who consume and purchase their produce; they do not recognise a large opium addiction rate in their area. Drug addiction was not considered as a pervasive enough problem to be included as a substantive reason to motivate a decrease; ironically numerous statements were made that those locals that were presently addicted were people who had had to emigrate in search of work due to loss of income caused by non-cultivation of opium.

There are disparities in the province about whether people view opium poppy cultivation as only a short term measure or as the only realistic long term future crop available to them; differences in perception was reflective -to a certain extent- of the availability of water and cultivable land, although the main motivator was the duration of antecedent experience cultivating opium poppy, and as such the distal mountainous districts (which have the longest tradition of cultivation) had the most negative outlook about the suitability and likelihood of cultivation of alternative crops.

5.1.5 Awareness of the Counter Narcotics campaign: information dissemination

The information chain and enforcement of the CN ban has been highly effective and comprehensive in Nangarhar Province and through the proactive role of the Provincial Government to disseminate information to all formal and informal institutions, information filtered down to all levels of society.

All of the village elders and Shura members were invited to Jalalabad by the Provincial Governor and were informed of the ban and the expected role that they and their communities had to fulfil. The information was then disseminated via the village elders to the community members. Regular meetings were held between the District Governors (who were themselves regularly called to attend discussions and conferences in Jalalabad on this matter) and the village elders. The severity of the message was re-enforced by the fact that prior to the 2004-5 growing season the Nangarhar governor had informed district authorities that they would be held responsible for the level of opium poppy cultivated in their own area, and that they would be removed from their positions if cultivation did not decrease.

Unlike the other provinces of investigation, the police in Nangarhar were also heavily involved in the information campaign- with the district and provincial police chief often sending letters to mosques to be decreed; letters to tractor owners stating that they were responsible if their tractor was hired for opium poppy cultivation purposes; actively explaining the decree to the indigenous population as well as creating lists of opium poppy cultivators and then inviting them to police offices to assess the situation and appeal to them.

Counter Narcotics Campaign posters and stickers were prevalent throughout Jalalabad as well as in rural areas.

Information was also gleaned from media sources, but this information was utilized mainly as a medium from which to understand the effects of the ban in other provinces.

All persons interviewed were fully aware of the consequences of breaking the ban - many people recounted their direct experience or witnessing of law enforcement on this matter - however there was a lack of knowledge about the reasoning behind the ban - apart from the detrimental effects of opium use-, most people just perceived it as a pre-condition for receiving assistance from the international communities who wanted reduced opium trafficking into their countries. There was no cognisance of the existence of the CNTF.

5.1.6 Alternative Livelihood Projects and assistance

Due to antecedent opium poppy cultivation levels in conjunction with the importance of Nangarhar in terms of security, the area has been assigned the most ALP funds out of all the priority provinces 70millionUSD (14% of the total assigned ALP funds). In addition to the ALP funds there has also been great interest expressed through national and other agency schemes. Developing alternative livelihoods supported by a new counter narcotics trust fund to develop skills amongst the rural work force and to provide micro-finance. The initial emphasis is on seven of the main opium producing provinces.

Whilst Nangarhar Province received the highest dedicated funds for assistance in 2005/6, it is actually amongst one of the lowest recipients when consideration is made to the size of poppy cultivation (based on 2004 opium cultivation figures – Nangarhar receives 2,485USD per hectare of opium), (UNODC, Mapping of ALP in Afghanistan).

The expectations of the people of Nangarhar towards ALP and assistance were massive. Due to these high expectations, there is perception that no matter what ALP do, they will not manage to satiate the community expectations.

The people anticipated the rejuvenation of antecedent agricultural crops as well as the progression of the rural economy. The interlocutors showed popular memory of Nangarhar being the ‘Garden of Afghanistan’, as well as the numerous crops that were cultivated prior to the instability that has rocked Afghanistan for the past few decades when water availability was greater. All villages stated an awareness of ALP and assistance activity but the appropriateness and the success of the project and the level of completion was variable and frequently questioned. People questioned why their knowledge was not being fully utilized and why previous agriculture and associated commerce was not being encouraged to be re-instated. The overriding request was for access to water, although appropriate schemes were also frequently suggested.

Previously the area had a very successful agricultural production levels and was a key provision province to other parts of Afghanistan. For such products as henna, fruits and vegetables

Key ministerial departments and intellectuals, who possess in-depth understanding about the agricultural capacity and potential of the province, have not – until recently - been incorporated into discussions; such as the Minister of Agriculture and key members of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nangarhar.

The people found that despite some efforts by the ALP to communicate with Shura’s about priorities, many schemes were inappropriate. The most frequently mentioned ALP activity was the provision of fertilizer and improved seed, and IF Hope orchards, however due to limited water and insufficient quantities of seeds and fertilizers these schemes were not viewed positively. Many orchards had died due to the lack of water, in addition to this, in the fertile and well irrigated Soviet established gardens of Bati Kot, the indigenous population mentioned that they had been offered an orchard, but that this was inappropriate, as the water table is so high that only orange trees could grow, whereas they could actually get three wheat crops.

The real priority was access to water – due to lack of water even irrigated land was suffering and without water there could be no commercial sale even if there were markets and improved roads to the markets. The shift to high value agriculture has been restricted by the lack of water – drought and irrigation systems that need modernizing. Most commented that they can reach the market in Jalalabad, but poor roads means that transportation of their produce deteriorates the quality of their produce. But they mention that the price of retail is not sufficient to compensate the costs of production

The location and area of dissemination of ALP activity also caused some concern. With much focus on central location (based upon the criteria of security, willingness, standards for consultation and a myriad of assessment needs) benefit the most agriculturally rich areas with high potential to develop strong licit economies. Priority not given to areas where dependency on cultivation is greatest and agriculture development potential is most limited, leading to rich being further advantaged. USAID openly admit that most micro-enterprises are located near roads and in secure areas – for access and safety of staff as well as accessibility to market. FAO feel that it is better not to spread their aid too thin –hoping to develop a cumulative effect- and consequentially choose areas that they have already helped. Assistance is focused on districts that adhere to the vulnerability assessments- criteria being land access, sufficient water access and other factors that will help influence the success of the project.

People were most satisfied by the provision of school buildings and clinics, although concern was mentioned about the quality of the teaching and the lack of income to afford doctors fees. In conjunction to this the accessibility was restricted by poor roads.

CREDIT

Previous fieldwork, including Grace and Pain in 2004, has revealed that credit is an integral part of rural livelihood strategies in Afghanistan. Indebtedness is a factor in both the creation as well as the perpetuation of poverty.

Need better access to credit to make repayments however notably complaints about credit was not as important as cries to improve their ability to produce crops through irrigation schemes – unlike many other places in Afghanistan, the fertile landscape provides people with an option to repay. Failure to repay debts was not mentioned as a source of conflict when crime issues were probed.

Necessity to replace Pakistani imported products by local Afghan products. Products that ALP suggest they grow are often substandard in comparison – would have to be in conjunction with a policy of protectionism to be effective.

Government is not taking the initiative as far as organizing public works – for example the olive industry and factory that is located in Jalalabad and runs.

There is little evidence to suggest that either the private sector of development assistance has yet delivered a fundamental shift in livelihoods across the province.

5.1.7 Impact of ALP upon the decision of farmers to stop cultivating opium poppy

The understanding that ‘without ALP there is no ban’ lead to pervasive promises of ALP and assistance being made to the population of Nangarhar by the governmental institutions and was crucial to the opium poppy cultivation decrease last year (2005). However the actual benefit to the populace and the number of projects that have been perceived as coming to fruition have led many people to reverse their attitude towards both ALP and opium poppy cultivation.

In Afghan culture the concept of 'promises' (*Wada*) is different to the Western understanding (which has led to the credibility of the ALP and international assistance providers being brought into question), it is frequently perceived that anything that is written down or that the populace is informed of, is a promise and there is no in depth perception of temporal scales for implementation of the promises. The people put faith into the fact that in the Quran, promises are taken very seriously and that you are responsible for the promises that you make; the breaking of a promise (*Wada Khelaafi*), results in the guilty party going to hell (*duzakh*). The overriding theme in regards to discussions of ALP was that the providers had rescinded upon their promises.

Whilst the interlocutors expressed some cognizant that promises were probably slightly inflated by the governments' (local and national) desire to produce maximum positive results, they did expect the majority of the promises to be fulfilled by the international community. Consequentially leading to the people of Nangarhar largely overruling their antecedent dependence upon opium poppy cultivation and their avarice, through their desire to assist in the development of a stable and prosperous law abiding country. People antecedently used opium poppy cultivation as an insurance against poverty and hunger and they denounced this in the belief that the promises of aid and assistance made to them via the information chain, were to be emplaced to cater for the opium poppy related deficit. They were willing to suffer temporarily to attain this, but when your 'children are starving' there is no amount of political information or propaganda that will dissuade you from implementing the most tried and tested coping strategy. Unlike many other areas of Afghanistan the people of Nangarhar appreciate that even if ALP were fully introduced that they would not provide financially comparable revenue to opium poppy sales; however, if there had been sufficient support so that they could still feed their families, they would be willing to suffer this shortfall in order to assist in the progression of an Afghanistan where the rule of law prevailed, and where their children could prosper through the cultivation of licit crops in conjunction to education and adherence of Islamic principles. This relatively unique perspective has unfortunately potentially been lost forever due to the 'failure' of ALP and assistance; however it was originally a key factor in the populace's risk decisions.

Of those that have received aid, it has been insufficient to cover the basic costs of living let alone any aspirations towards inflating income towards a sustainable level. No matter how well designed and implemented small interventions can not be expected to make much of an indent in comparison to Afghanistan's enormous opium economy and consequentially the disenchanting populace now consider that they can no longer rely upon inflated assistance 'promises' to sustain their families.

5.1.8 Consequences of non-cultivation of opium poppy

The people of Nangarhar are experiencing increased social and economic vulnerability due to their adherence to the CN edict. The overriding vulnerabilities are from poverty and malnutrition; with the consequential alteration of their psychological motivations to cater for these deficits.

The most prominent impacts have been due to repercussions of detrimental multiplier effects caused by a lowered income (which, already fell below the national average). On varying scales throughout the province poverty and malnutrition was recorded, with the greatest repercussions being most obvious amongst the resource poor. The most frequently stated coping strategy of the reduced income was the reduction of purchases of consumables –especially foodstuff and clothing - resulting in a deterioration of the general health; visible signs of malnutrition (stage three malnutrition - Kwashiorkor and Marasmus) were affirmed by verbal accounts of the inability to meet their dietary requirements. The present situation exacerbated an already vulnerable condition; in the previous year (2005) when remnants of opium revenue was still

somewhat in circulation the NRVA estimated that the percentage of Nangarhar's population consuming a diet with very poor food group diversity, was between 21- 40%, it can only be expected that this figure has increased dramatically within the last year (NRVA, 2005). To counter the effects of lowered income and poor access to credit the population has had to make considerable changes to their income generating activities in an attempt to stave off poverty and malnutrition and consequentially this has had knock on effects for social structures.

The impact of the reduction of opium poppy cultivation upon household structures has been considerable. Changes in response to non-cultivation include, a reduction in the number of marriages due to lack of funds for the ceremony and dowry (notably debt levels increased due to funeral costs (*jenaza*)), there is a greater proportion of young males remaining idle at home (reflective of the excess of youths and a deficit of occupations) and of those that migrate temporarily their migration is further a field than traditionally (antecedently males would migrate on an inter-district level dependent upon opium harvesting times, now they are forced to migrate further for opium related activities). In addition to this, the number that migrate internationally for work (mainly to Pakistan – Peshawar- for agricultural or construction work) has increased drastically. Whilst temporary migration has always been an accepted coping strategy and provided a considerable portion of the off-farm income to the Nangaharis whose jerib size/hh is too low to support the household, when one considers Mansfield's (2004) calculations that the loss of the wage labour opportunities associated with curbed opium poppy cultivation would entail a shortfall of 3.2 million labour days and 11.7 million in daily wages in Nangarhar alone, in conjunction to present lack of employment opportunities locally, it is obvious that this would have a considerable effect upon migration levels and consequentially households (due to prolonged periods of absence due to the greater distances involved). However the author would also like to clarify that people constantly reported that in previous circumstances they would also migrate for work, however they would return for opium harvesting; highlighting how, even with an opium system emplaced, migration was a common and accepted strategy to acquire extra income. The most dramatic change in migration has been the incidences of permanent migration, which are now similar to levels experienced during the Taliban ban in 2001. Some communities stated that up to 35% of households within villages were forced to emigrate in totality, as the community was unable to support them – this extreme migration was highest amongst those that had repatriated most recently and who owned low and poor quality jeribs or who were purely dependent upon sharecropping. Of interest is the fact that there has been limited impact upon female occupations; if women worked the land previously they still do and those that were solely occupied with household chores remain so occupied.

The present dire circumstances are further reflected in a lessening of the adherence to and respect of, the rule of law. Crime levels have reportedly increased as a repercussion of peoples' strive to provide for their families. Additionally the security situation is also deteriorating as people desperately try to protect their illicit income. Unfortunately these circumstances cause great social angst amongst the populace, as whilst people understand that these circumstances are born from the necessity to provide for their family needs, there is great shame attached to resorting to such anti-social behaviour.

The present circumstances have also led to a transition in regards to the people's psychologies and perception of their situation, with distress, depression, confusion, agitation, disbelief, unreliability, being key descriptive words. A commonly used and expressive anecdote epitomises the general feelings of desperation: 'When people are drowning, they think that they can reach out a hand to the hay from under the water and it will save their lives.' A considerable and disturbing consequence of the reduced cultivation has been the development of resentment and disenchantment towards the international community and to a lesser degree the government. Trust in foreigners and the government has been lost in many places due to unfulfilled promises of ALP, although it should be noted that faith in the government remains higher than that of the international community, with the indigenous populace showing more

leniency and understanding to the failings of the government than that of international actors. The population are disenchanted due to the lack of provision of alternatives and they are willing to recommence opium poppy cultivation to survive to and feed their families, however there is still considerable support for the government and they have a positive outlook on the future of Afghanistan. It should also be noted that the populace remain appreciative of the outside (international) presence in their province – a point of view that is not echoed throughout Afghanistan - and they comprehend that to endear themselves towards the international community and to ensure international assistance is maintained that they need to comply with international requests. Political discontent is greatest in areas furthest from the provincial capital (with distance from the capital often being proportional to the amount of assistance and ALP activity). The officials are at risk from the people's discontent turning into physical resistance to the threat of law enforcement and eradication. The people are resentful at having watched their country deteriorate and are impatient to achieve much in a short period – 'to make up for time lost'. This attitude in conjunction to inflated ALP promises led to a climate of expectation which unfortunately has now morphed into a comparably negative mentality where distrust, turbulence and conditional compliance will prevail more and more.

Whilst the overall picture of the consequences of non-cultivation are bleak – based purely upon the associated poverty, malnutrition and social consequences. There has been some evidence that benefits of non-opium poppy cultivation have been noticed by rural communities. The areas that have extensive irrigation systems –built by the former USSR- have often been the focus of extensive ALP activity and have managed to produce excess products which they can sell at market; consequentially re-instilling a sense of superiority, self-sufficiency and 'purity' due to their (*halal*) adherence to both religious and civic law. In conjunction to this, numerous interlocutors stated that now they are producing crops at home, their changed lifestyle conforms much more to Islamic teachings. An example being clarified in an Afghan proverb which emphasises the principle of '*barakat*' (blessing of Allah)

"Wheat bought from the bazaar will not last as long as the same amount grown by yourselves in your own field"

This transition towards a more overtly pious lifestyle has caused great pride amongst the populace, who are now able to cater for the more disadvantaged members of society (to provide for and feed beggars and economically weak), as well as presently cultivating sufficient food crops for their livestock. Whilst the importance of the recognition of these positive changes does play a part in risk decisions, unfortunately these minor mental victories are subsidiary to the main components of the equation, and hold no sway when faced with starvation.

5.1.9 The future of opium poppy cultivation in Nangarhar

The future cultivation of opium poppy in Nangarhar will unfortunately increase from the commendable 96% reduction levels experienced in 2005. At present opium poppy cultivation is mainly restricted to the Southern and Eastern borders of the province; where eradication and rule of law are reportedly hard to exert. The increase will occur in a wave motion; with districts closest to border districts (Spinghar Mountain area) incrementally being included in progressive waves. This wave spread is controlled by two factors; the proximity to those that are already growing and those that are suffering most from poverty inflicted by lack of irrigation, land and assistance. The expedience of the spread will be determined by the level of resolve for implementation of the rule of law; if cultivators' experience no negative consequences then spread will be increasingly rapid, as emulation and tolerance will prevail.

Reasons for the increase include a multitude of rationale, however the main factors are lack of pervasive ALP or assistance, resulting in poverty and hunger in conjunction to the coveting of conditions in distal districts which are still cultivating and have seen no major negative repercussions for their failure to adhere to the law; those that have curbed cultivation perceive that they have suffered more than those that disregarded the ban. The resilience ('bravery') of

those in border districts towards the ban and its enforcement ensured that they were 'allowed' to cultivate this year; many peripheral district persons commented that they would resist eradication with their lives, 'Death is better than poverty'. It is believed by the people that at present the least vulnerable are those in inaccessible areas that grow opium poppy; this is due to the belief that they are still making sufficient income to survive by previous standards, as well as the fact that they face limited risk of eradication due to both their willingness to physically resist (Achin women and children lay in front of tractors and so the governors allowed cultivation) as well as the inaccessibility of the location of their fields resulting in police reluctance to travel 'on foot' to such remote and insecure places. As progressive areas are permitted to cultivate, surrounding districts will be drawn in by the pressure from traffickers and traders as well as personal emulation. (At present, areas proximal to the traditionally high quality opium producing districts are experiencing considerable pressure from traffickers, as a knock on effect of cultivation in traditional districts.) Mansfield, (2005) suggested that there was a lot of pressure to return to cultivation in the 2005/2006 growing season, however he postulates that this was abated somewhat by the elections which gave renewed hope; in a climate where pressure still exists and the people have fresh experience of the negative consequences of non-cultivation, the prospects are bleak.

The main reason for increased cultivation was cited as being the lack of the promised assistance, which in conjunction to the drought has left many houses with insufficient food or money to provide the basic dietary necessities for their families. This failure to comply with expectations has fostered a mindset that people need to 'fend for themselves' rather than to believe or rely upon external assistance. Despite the fact that FEWS NET (2006) reported that Nangarhar covers about 70-90% of its supply and demand for wheat, the people feel that basic subsistence needs have been ignored, in return for a focus on commercially based activities that have not been pervasive. The people's response to this situation is anecdotal, 'When someone is sick you treat their specific illness', articulated in other terms this means that there needs to be the provision of a strategy to cope with or alleviate the problems that non-cultivation of opium poppy has induced that more appropriately targets the inherent problems. The severity of the circumstances resultant from a lack of alternatives is one of the key reasons for the negative spiral of faith and positivity towards the ban; the failure of assistance and ALP has undermined the considerable positive good will and tolerance that the ban was previously approached with. This change in faith is a crucial reason for the postulated increase in cultivation levels.

The fragility of Nangarharis vulnerability to opium poppy cultivation is most apparent in their entrenched mindset that opium is a viable coping strategy. This attitude is a direct response to the extended history of opium cultivation in Nangarhar – which varies throughout districts– lots of people describe it's cultivation as traditional; in addition to being a coping strategy it is also inherent to the rural psyche. The maximum starting point of cultivation is two hundred years (in peripheral districts) down to about ten years (Jalalabad) the majority of more centralised districts started cultivating as a response to the last thirty years of turbulence. Opium poppy cultivation has been so pervasive throughout the province that it is so intrinsic to some of these communities that it has invaded their circadian rhythm and controls all aspects of their lives. In such a setting where reliance upon this narcotic crop has been so pervasive for so long, it is little wonder that when left suffering from starvation and poverty that the people quickly calculate the quickest remedy to be re-cultivation.

This extensive connection – mentally and physically – with opium and the present suffering that people willingly undertook, means that the government's role to enforce the ban in the future is made even more difficult. The law enforcement agencies are increasingly reluctant to enforce eradication campaigns – sympathising with the poverty status of many who were let down by the promises of assistance. Police feel that they can not implement the law fully now as people are so poor, they will however enforce the ban more forcefully when the indigenous poverty status has been resolved. Despite this humanity shown by the law enforcers, disenchantment with the government is slowly growing, but especial disappointment is focused

upon the international community, who are viewed to have rescinded upon their promises and who have a contradictory approach; numerous tales of America's assistance to 'friendly' drug lords by 'transporting opium across the border to Pakistan in helicopters'. In a climate of increasing disenchantment - with both national and international advocates of the CN ban, - the potential of adherence to the edict plummets (especially in a region with such an extensive connection to opium poppy and such low social indexes).

If the government was to forcefully eradicate now then the security situation would decrease; due to hunger and poverty the populace will resort to taking arms. All people suggested that the most vulnerable to grow were those in remote traditional poppy growing places – Shinwar, Achin, and Khogyani. Notably those areas of comparative high opium poppy growth are also those areas that have reputedly high amount of weapons/hh as well as weapons caches. The willingness to use these weapons to defend their livelihoods suggests cyclical repercussions for security. This internal resolve to conduct aggressive activities against forces that would remove their livelihood, would create a void that may be filled by AGF who would sympathise and support the locals' disenchantment. This would facilitate a vicious downward cycle, with AGF encouraging opium poppy cultivation and aggressive resistance against the government; further perpetuating the aforementioned wave motion.

Additional considerations for an increase include the fact that opium prices remain high within the province – a fact which all farmers stated knowledge of - at the end of the cultivating season in 2006 the average price of opium (farm gate and trader) in the Eastern Region (which includes Nangarhar) was the highest in the country. Until July 2005 prices in the Eastern region and the Southern region were very close to each other, but after that date the prices increased in Eastern region and decreased in the Southern region, (UNODC, 2006c). This consideration provides a major incentive for re-cultivation, especially to cover the debt costs incurred and exacerbated due to adherence of the CN edict. Another factor which should be considered when postulating an increase in cultivation is the absence of large scale opium poppy diseases in the Winter – Spring 2005 which resulted in a much higher yield (kg/ha) than in previous year (there was extensive disease problems in 2004) and consequentially a productivity gain of 22% over 2004, (UNODC2006a). UNODC estimated that the average opium yields in 2004 were at their lowest in ten years producing on average 32kg/ha. It is considerably easier to halt cultivation of a crop that's yield is decreasing rather than vice versa. Due to the crop rotation – and consequential nutrient replenishment- of the past year, present yields from opium poppy crops would be expected to be greater than the year prior to non-cultivation. The cyclical and detrimental effect that this will have upon future cultivation is simple; a high yield for those recommencing cultivation will encourage cultivation in the subsequent years and will further incentivize external observers to also attempt to cultivate

Of course key factors also exist that may deter some to curb cultivation. These are the access to water and higher assistance levels in areas proximal to the provincial capital as well as pre-existing agricultural traditions. People from these localities take a rational outlook, expressing an understanding that wheat would be a viable crop to sell to those that are cultivating opium. One must also take into account the psychology of the people to assist and support the government where possible, as well as their implicit desire to adhere to Islamic teaching within the bounds of watching their children starve. The governmental rule in Nangarhar is comparatively stronger than in other provinces and so the enforcement of the ban in conjunction with eradication may have some positive impact upon the expedience of re-cultivation and obviously one must not underestimate the fact that the area still experiences some of the highest support from international communities, and will continue to do so as to ensure that another 'Tora Bora' incident does not replicate itself.

Unfortunately however, the overall picture is bleak if all variables remain constant. The crisis situation that is synonymous with opium production in Afghanistan is now being mirrored in Nangarhar; the crisis being the failure to attain the inflated expectations of the locals that have

curbed cultivation and that now face a potential famine situation. The juxtaposition of a seven year drought in conjunction with the lack of pervasive and sustainable ALP has meant that the crisis is immediate; action needs to be expedient and pervasive to prevent starvation and to minimise the negative impact that lack of faith in of the international community and consequentially the government will have upon the future effaceable implementation of the CN Law.

5.2 Central Region Provinces

The Central Region is located to the West of Kabul along the main East – West – North Afghan highway systems which run through the Hindu Kush Mountains - which provide an internal boundary and watershed. The chosen provinces have slight variations in physical conditions, varying between fertile plains fed by extensive access to the Panjsher, Ghorband, Logar and Salang River systems, rain and snow melt fed plains and steep but relatively fertile valleys irrigated by subsidiary channels. Central Region provinces have similar climatic, ecological and soil conditions to East Afghanistan. At present the area suffers from drought conditions. Agriculturally, the average number of jeribs per household is very low (among some of the lowest in Afghanistan – around 1.5) despite this, the cultivation of commercial crops is extensive in fertile areas, with commercial markets existing for almonds, apples, apricots and pomegranates. Opium poppy cultivation has antecedently been negligible, (UNODC, 2005b)

The Central Region has been and continues to be, a relatively secure area. During the Taliban rule the area was extensively controlled by the Mujahidden and was the birth place of the deeply respected Ahmad Shah Masood (assassinated leader of the Northern Alliance). Most of the area is devoid of AGF activity; however progressive instability from the Southern Region is beginning to penetrate some areas of the Central South Region.

Aid and assistance in Central provinces is on a much lesser scale than the main opium cultivating provinces, and due to its low opium poppy cultivation levels and good security situation it receives much less international attention. However some attempt has been made by the GoA not to prioritise aid to opium poppy cultivating areas to the detriment of law abiding areas and this has resulted in some national programme and international NGO activities.

The relative stability of opium poppy cultivation at zero or extremely low levels throughout time, when so many rural Afghan populations claim that opium poppy is the only viable coping strategy available to them ensures that the Central Region is an essential and representative location for investigations into causative factors for fluctuations and variations in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

5.2.1 Characteristics and cultural considerations for the people of the Central Region

The people of the Central Regions are a progressive, adaptive and resourceful community, having benefited from the relative security of the region they have managed to utilize these attributes to develop self initiated and preserved coping strategies in the form of licit agricultural adaptations and migration for work so as to maintain their quality and ethos towards life; a fact which in comparison to the tumultuous remainder of the country they are appropriately proud of.

The people of Logar Province are especially renowned for their very proactive nature and ability to adapt expediently to changes in a positive and sustainable manner. This is in part due to the high importance that the populace attach to education (similar to Nangarhar, Logar and Wardak Provinces are famous for the number of intellectuals and government ministers that they provide), as well as their piety – religion is crucial to life, and education starts by a combination of listening to Mullahs and reading the '*Qaeda Bughdadi*' (a small booklet to help pupils learn the Arabic alphabet and Holy Quran). They view themselves as somewhat more sophisticated than other lesser educated provinces and do not wish to be compared to other Muslims in Afghanistan, as there is a perception that in other areas religion is utilized for egotistical reasons rather than a true understanding and adherence.

In keeping with the teachings of the Quran, Central Region people show less jealousy for the improved conditions of others, they are more grateful, less demanding and more rational in their comments about why they deserve assistance. The populace are less impatient for advancement and are willing to aid progression themselves even if this means a short period of deficit (they have a long term focus); they are comparatively more self sustaining, thoroughly believing that 'Allah will provide', this is most apparent in the fact that upon repatriation they spent all monetary reserves on rehabilitation, building a lifestyle for themselves that they hoped would be supported by gradual improvements in the economic and social conditions in Afghanistan.

In terms of ethnicity, they are a harmonious mix of Tajik, Pashtun, Pashayee and Hazara, all following the teachings of the Holy Quran and showing deep respect for informal and informal institutions. Whilst education levels vary amongst the differing ethnicities, they are comparatively more aware of their role in a unified society compared to other areas of Afghanistan. The psychologies of the indigenous population of the Central Region operate in the third motivational stage, showing an elevated awareness of international considerations and tolerance and comprehension about problems faced by others in Afghanistan - despite the fact that they themselves have some of the worst socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan.

5.2.2 Main reasons for low or non-cultivation of opium poppy

The prevalence and importance bestowed upon adherence to the Islamic religion in conjunction to the pre-existence of a culture of coping strategies devoid of opium poppy cultivation are the main reasons for non cultivation within the majority of the Central provinces.

There was repeated reference during discussions that opium poppy belongs to the '*mukhaderaat*' category (substances that alter the mind) and subsequently its cultivation is '*haram*' (prohibited and against Islam) and that the consequence of involvement with such products will lead to the individual being sent to *duzakh* (hell). The inhabitants of the Central Region feel strongly that the cultivation of opium poppy is a crime against the Islamic faith and consequentially do not wish to grow it and strive to create and develop alternatives to support their families.

The people of Central Afghanistan, despite having some of the lowest incomes - and jerib sizes have proved that their education (and hence, perspective) and adaptability, has facilitated coping strategies that have provided a self sufficient life style that is ironically less vulnerable than that of opium poppy cultivation at the moment. Their perseverance with crops well suited for their land in conjunction with the ability to adapt to circumstances which have forced many of them to migrate internationally for work, without resorting to rescinding upon the values by which they live their lives, or resenting the government authorities, highlights their self sufficient success and devout adherence to the pillars of Islam. Whilst they accept community responsibility for any illicit cultivation, they do expect that in the near future the government should provide support; whilst this was not expressed as a threat, it does highlight their comprehension that the support they offer to the government through adherence to its edicts – and consequentially the faith that they emplace- is reciprocal: 'It is the role of the government to help the province and the role of the people to conform to the law.'

Pragmatic comments were also made that cultivation was probably never developed there due to the fact that the Central Region has no borders for trade (it is not a conduit for opium trade with other provinces) and conjunctively, that the Central provinces do not have an extensive history of opium cultivation. Unlike many other provinces in Afghanistan, Central residents were not encouraged to grow by warlords to fund recent wars, as they were ruled by the fervently respected Ahmad Shah Masood who forbade any drugs (even the smoking of

cigarettes). This has led to lack of knowledge about the profitability, cultivation styles and market access available to opium poppy cultivators.

5.2.3 Perception about opium poppy cultivation

The overriding theme of the perception of the population in Central provinces about opium poppy cultivation was the fact that it is anti-Islamic; '*mukhaderaat*' are '*haram*'. (Some people commented that they had tried to cultivate but that the crop had failed, which was a sign that Allah was punishing them). They stated that as devoutly religious people they were aware of the negative consequences of a Muslim country cultivating opium poppy for both the Muslim and non-Muslim people of the world. More so than any other province, when the people spoke of opium poppy cultivation they referred to its detrimental repercussions; showing genuine concern for negative consequences within and outside of Afghanistan.

The interviewees expressed considerable concern about the entrenched and detrimental role of opium in Afghanistan society and showed some perception about the nexus between opium cultivation and the destabilization of Afghanistan through corruption and funding of AGF. However, their overriding belief was that people were growing opium because they were so poor and that poverty creates instability more than other factors.

Whilst they were aware of the provinces that were growing opium at the moment (this information was gathered and imparted through travelling in Afghanistan, as well as through the radio), they had variable comprehension of the benefits associated with cultivation; some areas mistakenly thought that they would receive more income from their commercial apricot crops than the same *jerib* size of opium poppy; whereas as other interlocutors highlighted that opium poppy cultivators '*win twice*' – if they do not cultivate then they receive assistance and if they do grow then they receive a high income. However, even those persons that recognised that there were some benefits of cultivation, showed no indication of wishing to commence cultivation at present.

Overall, they showed compassion for those that cultivated opium poppy, but suggested that more attention should be targeted towards traffickers and traders. They held firm to their belief that those that cultivated opium poppy and were consequentially prepared to risk going to hell (*duzakh*) must be motivated purely by poverty.

5.2.4 Awareness of the Counter Narcotics campaign: information dissemination

The interlocutors were aware of the ban but showed a limited understanding of the consequences of breaking the law. However, they showed extensive knowledge about the assistance and funding that was being assigned and disseminated in areas that were in breach of the ban; although they were not cognizant of the CNTF.

The people gather their information about CN from the media. There has not been an extensive governor-led counter narcotics information campaign in these provinces.

5.2.5 Assistance

The people made comparably limited requests for assistance (in order of frequency: irrigation, employment, roads) and showed limited expectations of receiving any. They firmly held the belief that it was the government's responsibility more than the international communities to provide assistance projects. They felt that the government should re-invest in industries such as the textile manufacturing that the Central Region was famous for prior to the war (the Gulbahari textile factory ran for about forty years and provided a key market for the cotton crops which are so well suited to the regions agricultural conditions).

5.2.6 The future of opium poppy cultivation in Central Provinces

The strength of the community's resolve to adhere to Islamic teachings, their proud resilience to maintain the emplaced coping strategies, their respect for governmental institutions (on average just over 65% of people voted for President Karzai), as well as their appreciation of their individual responsibility to humanity in both an international and national context, points to the unlikely prospect of major opium poppy cultivation throughout the region in the near future.

However, it should be highlighted that there are certain key factors that have encouraged some within the region to attempt to cultivate opium. The main reason for an increase or experimentation with opium poppy cultivation would be due to observations of the benefits for those who cultivate. This information is presently being collected from media sources, through migration for work (mainly construction in Iran), travel throughout the country and from inter-province migration of people -purely for the purpose to sharecrop and attempt to cultivate opium poppy within the Central Region- who impart knowledge and advocate illicit cultivation. The information gleaned from the above sources is perceived by the Central region population to point to beneficial circumstances for those that cultivate opium poppy, such as increased assistance, strengthening of incomes and the apparent increased concern and motivation for improvements by the government. At present within the Central Region there is a murmuring of disenchantment with President Karzai, who they feel has rescinded on the promises he made whilst campaigning and this in conjunction with the drought and the lack of appropriate support for the coping strategies which they have nurtured, has forced Central Region inhabitants to bear large debts of, which without the prospect of the development of credit systems (to cover the investments in their licit incomes and to cover the increasing transportation costs – diesel and customs), rehabilitation of irrigation and the rehabilitation and creation of non-farm employment Central residents will not be able to manage their income from purely licit means.

Whilst there is a willingness to avoid cultivation, the recent attempts to cultivate opium – albeit through the impetus of outsiders – is concerning. Luckily these crops failed to obtain yields, which have constricted the levels of opium poppy cultivation. However it should be noted that the potential cultivation of cannabis was mentioned as a viable coping strategy by some farmers. Cannabis is traditional in the Central Region and shows how easily drug cultivation can be incorporated into coping strategies; the inhabitants of most of the Central provinces mentioned that they could easily find a market for cannabis through traders that have already made contact with the people. Whilst the people expressed that -due to the same reasons that they stated for their preference of non opium poppy cultivation - they would not wish to have to resort to growing cannabis, as even though it is a more socially accepted narcotic (Afghanistan has high recreational use levels) it was still '*haram*', however without any future prospect of support for their self instituted coping strategies, they must prepare themselves for the consequences of a continued drought.

The author would like to mention that within some Central provinces, this assessment may not apply. Unfortunately security restrictions meant that the more Southern Central provinces were not available for study; these are the areas were the author would suggest that opium poppy cultivation levels will increase due to the aforementioned reasons.

5.3 Balkh Province

Located in the North West of Afghanistan, Balkh Province has international borders with both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Balkh Province consists of expansive flat plains with peripheral mountains. Access to water varies from fertile well irrigated plains (fed by the Bamyān-Balkh River) and rain fed undulating plateau and mountain systems. Notably the rain dependent agricultural areas receive similar rainfall to Nangarhar (FEWS NET, 2006). Balkh Province has a long tradition of successful agriculture – ‘The North has the stock of Afghanistan’- based upon the large jerib/hh (with some individuals possessing thousand’s of jeribs of land, and the provincial average being considerably higher than Central and Eastern regions – Balkh Province average jeribs/hh is ten), the fertility of the land which facilitates bi and tri-annual cropping patterns, as well as the fact that Balkh Province has the greatest amount of irrigated land in all of Afghanistan. However, considerable portions of agricultural are seasonal nomadic farming and grazing. The areas of greatest productivity are the areas to the East of Mazar-i-Sharif (provincial capital and fourth largest city in Afghanistan), which were disseminated to Pashtuns from the South by the government between fifty and a hundred years ago. Large segments of the remaining fertile irrigated land around Mazar-i-Sharif are still owned by the government.

Balkh’s cultivation of opium has only recently (2005) dramatically increased; in comparison to 2004 the increase was by a massive 334% from 2,500ha to a record 10,837 ha (UNODC, 2005b). (Prior to the Taliban rule -1996-2001- there was no cultivation of opium poppy in Balkh Province.) Balkh Province was the third highest opium poppy cultivator in 2005, following Hilmand and Kandahar – in respective order. This increase is synonymous with an increase in opium cultivation in the North of Afghanistan as a whole. Cultivation is mainly concentrated in key districts within Balkh Province including Balkh, Mazar-i-Sharif, Chimtal, Dihdadi, Sholgara and Cahr Bolak, (UNODC, 2005b, 2006a, and 2006b). Most of the opium crop is transported to the South of Afghanistan for processing – a consequence of disparities in opium prices between Badakhshan (where there are also processing facilities and transit routes) and those of the South, in conjunction to the social connection to Southern Pashtuns.

Whilst Balkh is a relatively peaceful province, it is not a unified province; ethnic contentions – between the Turkmen, Hazara, Pashtun, Tajik and Uzbek populations – pervade all issues of instability in the area; resulting in much attention focused by governmental institutions to appease this. The village focus is heavily entrenched upon political allegiance. The main political parties in Balkh Province are: Junbish, Wahdat, Jamiat (often led by ex-commanders); with each party receiving variable international subsidies and subsequent exertion of authority – such as the Russian connection and agenda with Junbish. The dichotomies provided by these international allegiances are further exacerbated by the traditional North South rivalries and power struggle; which have ensured a reluctance to implement DDR and DIAG, due to disbelief about Southern militia disarmament. The situation was further hindered by the transitional rule of law (a University Professor was initially appointed governor) which lead to the proliferation of a weak and corruption law enforcement. At present the security situation has been sufficient to allow extensive construction works however, with increasing numbers of AGF operating in the area carrying out malign acts as well as rising political party tensions, the future security is potentially at a transition.

As one of the seven key bilateral priority provinces, Balkh Province has received a lot of international attention and aid - being assigned 3% (16millionUSD) of the total ALP funds. Conjectively, Balkh has also received considerable attention from national programmes lead by MoRRD, (UNODC, 2005a).

The recent and massive increase in opium poppy cultivation, in conjunction with ethnic and political divisions, the worsening of the security situation and the extensive ALP activities ensure that Balkh Province is an essential and representative location for investigations into causative factors for fluctuations and variations in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

5.3.1 Characteristics and cultural considerations for the people of Balkh Province

The key difference in the psychology of the people of Balkh in comparison to the other study localities is the control that political allegiance has on the populations' perception about their circumstances. There is considerable political awareness, to the point that specific villages and districts have political allegiance. This is both a repercussion of the present diverse ethnic groups (Pashtuns, Dari speaking groups -Tajik and Hazara- and the Altaic Uzbek group -descendants of Genghis Khan's armies) that are seeking acceptance and authority within the social structure as well as antecedent experiences of political resistance (the province was included within the Northern Alliance). The political climate is so tense that much effort is exerted to appease the diverse groups often to the detriment of ensuring that the rule of law is enforced. The consequence of the feelings of under-representation of certain groups means that psyche's focus on self promotion and gains more than on the concept of nationalism and unification; consequentially there is an increased tendency to look to external forces for support. This approach and attitude is reflective of the previous tribal system prolific throughout Afghanistan prior to the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. These societal divisions also lead to a reduced concept of pride about their province; there is a disassociation of the concept of originating from a province, but rather from originating from a particular ethnicity that now exerts its influence through political means, rather than the more traditional war mongering of past. This desire to assert themselves politically has led to inflated expectations emplaced upon the government and no apparent comprehension of the magnitude of the problems that the government faces nationwide – the residents understanding of the issues faced by the government is debased to a simplistic and self severing level. There is considerable national ethnic jealousy with groups claiming any breaches of laws are a repercussion of a nationally biased system that favours one particular ethnic group.

Whilst the role of the commanders and their political parties has usurped religion to that of secondary importance, religion still proves a strong unifying force for those ethnic minorities totally under-represented politically. Notably, for politically represented groups, religion is utilized as a tool for self benefit through the adaptation of Quranic verses. This highlights a massive cultural and psychological transition; previously, Balkh City was not only revered as the 'Mother of all Cities' due to its sophisticated and intelligent inhabitants, but was also a religious mecca.

In comparison to other provinces, education has also taken a comparatively secondary role in the psyche of the people. This is due to two reasons, firstly that Uzbek, Hazara and Tajik have traditionally paid less attention to education than Pashtun people (in other regions) as well as the fact that the large jerib/hh status of the province means that more attention is focused upon agricultural activity so as to increase productivity of the land and consequentially household income. (The motivational psychologies are short term reward based.) However this desire to multiply on the agricultural facilities naturally provided has not fostered a highly innovative community, but rather one that prefers heavy instruction and agricultural assistance –similar to the USSR system that they adhered to and flourished in. This recollection of the past as an exemplary period, has lead to a somewhat retrospective way of thinking; they desire to be progressed but are inactive on ensuring this outcome. This lack of initiative is balanced by the populaces tendency to strive to keep up to date with new trends (in part a repercussion of the political atmosphere necessitating support of popular trends); readily adapting to new customs (more so than is the case in more traditionally focused Pashtun strongholds – such as

Nangarhar), consequentially the city of Mazar-i-Sharif has developed an atmosphere more similar to Kabul in comparison to Nangarhar. Overall the population of Balkh Province can be viewed as operating in the secondary psychological motivational stage, which, being above the primary need to survive, facilitates concepts of affiliations and personal aspirations without comprehending or having an inclination to foster a broader socially responsible attitude.

5.3.2 Main reasons for the increase in opium poppy cultivation

The most prominent reasons for an increase in opium poppy cultivation in Balkh Province have been the awareness of financial benefits through the immigration of skilled labour and observations and associations with other opium cultivating areas of Afghanistan, in conjunction to governmental disenchantment. In addition to these key reasons subsidiary factors have combined to encourage a climate vulnerable to increased cultivation.

The pre-disposition of the people in Balkh Province to hark back to the ‘golden days’ of pre-Taliban, have meant that whilst Balkh Province is a comparatively affluent province, the combination of the recent history of uncertainty and drought has led to a reduced financial situation. Their desire to remedy this was capitalized on by the considerable connection to and displacement of persons from traditional opium cultivating areas. Migration of skilled opium cultivating labour from provinces such as Nangarhar (due to population densities and the recent successful enforcement of the ban there) to sharecrop or rent land in Balkh lead to a direct emphasis of the potential benefits of illicit cultivation. In conjunction to this is the close connection with Southern cultivators and processors – many of whom are family members – and who even during the Taliban rule were encouraging and informing the Balkh Province Pashtun populace of the availability of international markets and cultivation techniques. The recent drought exacerbated the vulnerability of the indigenous populace to be motivated by the concept of their past glories, when circumstances were such that their agricultural products were sold at reliable markets for high prices (a circumstance that now, only opium can command in Afghanistan). Additional to this, finance from opium can be used as insurance against any detrimental consequences of the chronic ethnic issues that divide the province and the region, (this is most obviously highlighted by numerous public calls by certain political leaders for the movement of Balkh Province Pashtuns back down South, crucially these motions only failed to be implemented due to insufficient force).

A growing disenchantment towards the government and the future of Afghanistan also encouraged contempt of the law. Considerably lower proportions of the populace voted for President Karzai in comparison to Nangarhar and Central provinces and when political and ethnic divergent affiliations within the region are factored in, it is obvious that loyalty and subsequent adherence to the government’s laws are not primary motivators for the people of Balkh Province. Of concern, is the fact that numerous persons who initially had faith have now rescinded upon their support, as they view all levels of government as corrupt. There is a general conscientious that the provincial governance is weak and accessible to bribes in all areas, be it to prevent eradication or to bribe the officials to ensure that certain parties are allowed to rent the extremely fertile and well irrigated government land around Mazar-i-Sharif.

5.3.3 Overall perception about the increase of opium poppy cultivation

The overriding perception of the people of Balkh Province towards opium poppy cultivation was that it was a good crop for providing high revenue – some interlocutors even mentioned that they had more money now than they really needed. They strongly believed that opium poppy cultivation was a consequence of insufficient assistance and especially the lack of creation of jobs for the youthful males.

Of all the sampled areas, the people of Balkh Province, showed the least concern over the Islamic teachings about cultivation of '*musikarat*' substances being '*haram*'. They also showed the least concern about the implications of cultivation on drug addiction levels in the area.

For the indigenous populace opium poppy was just another crop that due to the good agricultural situation in Balkh Province was available for them to cultivate until such a time as the government re-instated an agricultural system that would allow them to re-establish high income commercial crops and to attain their antecedent status within Afghanistan as one of the main agriculturally rich provinces.

5.3.4 Awareness of Counter Narcotics Campaign: information dissemination

Whilst the interlocutors were aware of the ban, they showed limited appreciation of the consequences of breaking the law apart from the possibility of eradication, (and especially, the use of paid child labour to conduct the eradication).

Dissemination of information and the understanding of the population about the opium poppy ban was less pervasive than in Nangarhar, but greater than that of Kandahar and Central provinces.

Most people relied upon the media to gather information; however there was mention of the fact that elders from the village were recently (March 2006) called to the Provincial Governor's office in Mazar-i-Sharif to talk to members of the MoCN, and latterly called to district centres to further discuss. Religious community members of the community were given CN posters.

The interviewees showed a comparatively high understanding of the potential detrimental impacts of opium on instability in Afghanistan. They directly correlate opium poppy with corruption in government – believing that it is an issue that pervades all levels of government. On a considerably lesser scale – to other areas - they were also aware of the potential influence on drug addiction, but showed no recognition of the existence of the CNTF.

5.3.5 Alternative Livelihood Projects and assistance

Balkh Province is one of the key assistance provinces in Afghanistan a repercussion of a mixture of opium poppy cultivation levels as well as the province's diverse ethnic mix. Due to the relatively good security situation, the assistance seems to have been more pervasive than in other key provinces; assistance dissemination would also have benefited by the comparatively good infrastructure and the preserved agricultural systems, as well as the regions previous experience with large scale internationally commercial crops. As one of the ten priority provinces for livelihood support, considerable funds have been dedicated, including 516millionUSD through the Rural Recovery Programme and the sixth largest amount for ALP 16millionUSD (3%).

Previously, the most important commercial crop was cotton (about 50% of total production), each district had storage facilities where the material was stored prior to its transportation to the sorting factory in Mazar-i-Sharif (Jenpress) where the cotton was separated from the seed and then separated into three types of quality (types one and two were exported to textile factories in the then USSR and grade three was left for the internal market). Seeds were also separated into quality and then sold back to farmers.

The interlocutor's main request was the re-instatement of the agricultural support (centrally run systems) that was active during the government of President Najibullah and throughout the

USSR's occupation; a co-op system (offering micro-finance schemes), seed, fertilizer, pesticides and irrigation rehabilitation. The people expressed concerned that the qualities of Afghan produce (especially wheat and rice) are poor in comparison with Pakistan and central Asian countries produce, and consequentially there is no market for their goods. The interviewees understood that there was a need to create markets for their products, but they felt that corruption undermined 'international people coming in and setting up businesses'.

The perceived success of the assistance and ALP schemes has been variable. Numerous agencies and institutions have had been comparatively successful in contrast to other areas, however, due to the long term duration of many of the projects the people are not experiencing as many tangible benefits as they would wish. (Of the total funds assigned to Balkh Province, 10millionUSD has been allocated to the improvement of the irrigation system (the regeneration of intakes and culverts built by the USSR on the river from Bamyan to Mazar-i-Sharif) that will not be implemented for five years.) The NSP has also been extensively active throughout the area, and conducts 'wish list' sessions with the NSP Shura.

Unfortunately the people of Balkh Province – despite having large amounts of assistance as well as a large number of projects come to fruition- are disappointed with the ALP and assistance provision. They feel that sunflower cultivation schemes are not viable options, as despite the climate being well suited, there is at present no factory in Balkh Province to process the products combined with the fact that Dubai is already a main producer of high quality sunflower products. The response to the three main priorities of the ALP - soya bean, saffron and cotton- were pessimistic. Whilst the soya bean programme did not start until this year (2006), the French NGO that is running the cotton industry rehabilitation has experienced numerous problems, including the inability to sell the cotton (which is advertised on national television and stockpiled in Mazar-i-Sharif) and the subsequent inability to pay farmers for their crops. At the time of investigation the Saffron scheme was the least belittled, however, the initiation of saffron cultivation and commerce is a three to four year campaign and so the populace have not felt any tangible benefits yet and so were not overtly optimistic.

5.3.6 Impact of ALP upon the decision of farmers to cultivate opium poppy

The lack of pervasive understanding and tangibility of ALP activities within their area meant that many people did not even consider this as a factor in their risk decisions of whether to cultivate opium poppy. The people did however stipulate that the support offered via the government was factored in as insignificant, leaving them with no choice but to cultivate illicit crops. There was a clear conscientious that if the government was serious about enforcing the ban, then they would ensure that alternative livelihoods were available, otherwise enforcement of the ban would result in a mass migration to Iran, Pakistan and Uzbekistan to work in a factories.

The possibility for the future impact of ALP upon the decisions of the people of Balkh Province is considerable. A recurrent theme was that if jobs were available then they would be happy to survive on a lot less - 'We aren't asking the government for money, we are asking for work.'

Whilst projects in the province have been comparatively pervasive, due to the long term focus of many projects and the indigenous desire for immediate remedies, the people are losing faith, a fact which is directly co relatable to opium poppy cultivation levels.

5.3.7 Consequences of an increase in opium poppy cultivation

The most frequently reported consequence of opium cultivation was the increase in household income, facilitating expenditure on 'luxuries' and the repayment of debts. Debt levels are on

average 400USD (20,000AFN approx), which highlights a considerable disparity with those presently not cultivating in other parts of Afghanistan.

Whilst the people felt that they now had a very good lifestyle, they did highlight that the increase in cultivation had not removed all social concerns, which overwhelmingly were the lack of employment and consequentially migration of the youth in search of work outside of Afghanistan (Pakistan and Iran), as well as internal migration to Kunduz and Herat for non opium related work.

5.3.8 The future of opium poppy cultivation in Balkh Province

There are two binary conclusions to draw about the future of opium cultivation in Balkh, both point to only slight changes around last years cultivation figures for the year 2006, but one will lead to a decrease and one to an increase. It is possible to highlight key factors which will influence cultivation levels – as these will influence the populaces' relative feelings of security or insecurity to cultivate; rule of law and enforcement of eradication versus political disenchantment and a decrease in the security situation due to external forces.

If the provincial government is active and strongly enforces the rule of law through eradication campaigns then there will be a decrease. The consequences of eradication has already been seen in the removal of poppy cultivation from the district centre (eradication was verified as being 18% of the total eradication in the whole country (UNODC, 2006b)), as well as the fact that those villages that had experience of eradication stated that they did not cultivate this year as it focused there attention on how vulnerable there livelihoods would be. The future of more effective eradication is made increasingly optimistic by the change (2006) by the donor countries of the eradication payment procedures; they will first conduct a survey, then they provide provincial officials with funds based on the total number of opium poppy fields destroyed. It is crucial that those areas that do not presently cultivate in Balkh Province, do not consider that the enforcement is lenient, as this may have considerable longer term impacts for cultivation in areas which do not cultivate; cultivation could potentially propagate throughout the remoter parts of the province, which would make the eradication less successful, especially when one considers that at present the highest concentrations of opium poppy cultivation are in districts within close proximity to the provincial centre and there has not even been complete eradication in these accessible localities.

An alternative set of circumstances resulting from either a decrease in province security or political disenchantment, have the potential to induce a reverse effect to eradication. The majority of the indigenous Balkh populace have limited faith in the government –at all levels-believing it to be inherently corrupt. The TA is becoming increasingly disenchanted with their provincial government believing it to be susceptible to bribery even without opium poppy cultivation, a fact which is reflected in the non-conformity to the opium ban. The sensitivity of the political climate in Balkh Province is synonymous with surrounding provinces, facilitating ominous comparisons; tension in Faryab due to political parties has resulted in an increase in opium production, and undermining of the governmental control. This chain of events is increasingly concerning, as in Balkh Province there are already strong connections to the Southern Region opium cultivating and processing communities. These groups would be content to see a destabilization of the governmental influence as this would positively affect the relatively low prices of opium in Balkh (a consequence of the logistics costs of transportation to the Southern processing plants). With the increasing influence of external forces on the political parties in Balkh Province in conjunction with increases in AGF activity in the area, it seems likely if this future was to be enacted then opium levels would increase. (A caveat should be expressed that due to the opening of roads to the South in conjunction to the government plan for eradication, the price of opium is likely to increase, which will further entice cultivation.)

It is an obvious statement to mention that any decrease in cultivation would be expected to be proportional to the provision of assistance (through national and bi-lateral programmes); however it should be noted that if given the choice, the people of Balkh would wish to continue cultivating opium poppy and also to have employment provided for their youth in a stable and secure environment. Despite the TA realisation that this is a contradictory and unrealistic ideal, it highlights the necessity to rely upon the strong enforcement of the rule of law rather than willing co-operation of the populace by appealing purely to them on a rational level.

Ultimately the decision of whether to cultivate opium poppy will be made by the Shura, however, at present the TA are under considerable pressure from negative political forces, traders from Kandahar, Kabul and Badakhshan (some of whom openly purchase raw opium in close proximity to Mazar-i-Sharif), as well as being heavily motivated by other regions 'being allowed' to grow opium and simultaneously receiving considerable aid and assistance. Additionally, many farmers now perceive opium as 'just another crop' that facilitates a functioning agricultural system, with numerous claims that they 'need opium poppy to be able to grow wheat', as otherwise they would not be able to pay for the hire of agricultural machinery, such as tractors, which rent at a daily rate of (600AFN 12USD approx). Opium poppy has become an accepted mechanism to improve and sustain the quality of life for those in Balkh Province that cultivate it.

A caveat should be expressed that numerous opium poppy cultivators mentioned that if the law was strongly enforced then they would grow cannabis instead – which in many opium cultivating areas in Balkh Province, already constitutes a substantial second crop, and in those areas where it is not presently grown they admitted to have already started to discuss its future cultivation.

5.4 Kandahar Province

Kandahar Province is strategically located in the Southeast of Afghanistan; controlling the main trade route linking the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent with the Persian Gulf. It is a major transit route both for internal and external movement; it shares the longest border with Pakistan (1402km) of all Afghan provinces as well as the main road between Southern Afghanistan and Quetta (Pakistan), in addition, Kandahar Province is the gateway to much of Southern and Western Afghanistan – through the Kabul-Kandahar Road (Highway One), which continues through the Southern provinces to Herat. It is the third largest province in Afghanistan (covering an area of 54, 025 km²) and one of the most populated, approaching nearly one million inhabitants. The landscape is a combination of fertile and well irrigated areas fed by the Arghand-ab, Tarnak and Hilmand tributaries; mountainous terrain in the North and North-East with isolated valleys being dependent on snow melt rain fed stream systems (*karez* systems were previously –prior to their destruction in the Soviet-Afghan War- very important); desert terrain dominates the South of the province (which is largely unpopulated, except for a band of population along the border with Pakistan). The province has a long history of successful and developed agriculture; it is within the top four provinces in regards the amount of irrigated land available for agriculture. The irrigated land has the capacity to yield bi-annual and tri-annual crops. Unlike many places in Afghanistan the drought has not been as severe in Kandahar in comparison to other localities (FEWS NET, 2006). The average jerib size/hh is relatively high, a fact which is reflected in the income levels (UNODC, 2005b).

Kandahar Province has an extended history of opium cultivation and has traditionally been within the top five opium producing provinces in Afghanistan (alternating with Uruzgan and Badakhshan Provinces from third to fifth position); however in 2005, opium poppy cultivation increased sharply to a record high and Kandahar became the second highest cultivating province (after Hilmand); 2005 opium poppy cultivation covered 12,989ha a dramatic increase of 162% in comparison to 2004 cultivation figures, (UNODC, 2005b). Opium is by far the largest export from the province and vast quantities of narcotics are transported through Kandahar particularly through Spin Bolak district en route West to Pakistan. Verified eradication levels (22% of Afghanistan's total eradication in 2006), which were nationally the second highest, are reflective of the increased opium poppy cultivation levels, (UNODC, 2006b).

The security situation in the Kandahar has remained volatile since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Like Hilmand, Uruzgan and Zabul, Kandahar Province is the historical birthplace and home of the Taliban and serves as a safe haven for AGF (including the Taliban, Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin and al-Quida), the main objective of whom is the forced withdrawal of international forces and the usurping of Central Government. Disturbingly, the security situation has deteriorated in the last year, with constant and directed attacks against peace keeping and law enforcement forces located there (both national and international) and government institutions. AGF also use low-level harassment techniques against local nationals and NGO's (both of which remain the second highest priority for AGF). Insurgency is prevalent throughout the province; activity is most concentrated in the Eastern, Northern, Western districts, although attacks are also common along the main highways into Kandahar city. Kandahar Provinces' location as a transit route for insurgents and smuggling from Pakistan into other Southern and Eastern provinces makes the likelihood of an easy and expedient stabilization unlikely. AGF activity is likely to continue in the near future – with considerable attention focused on the destabilizing and destroying of reconstruction efforts.

Kandahar Province has received a lot of international attention and has been dedicated vast amounts of aid in comparison to other provinces due to a combination of factors, which include

antecedent opium poppy growing levels, the security situation and the necessity to appease the traditionally Taliban supporting Southern Pashtun community so as to consolidate them into the nation. Kandahar is one of the seven key bilateral priority provinces. The ALP funds dedicated to Kandahar Province are the fifth largest in the country –22millionUSD (4%) – in addition to this, considerable rural development projects and national programmes, such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) lead by MoRRD, have been committed to the province (UNODC, 2005a).

The antecedent high cultivation levels of opium poppy and the massive increase last year, in conjunction with the worsening of the security situation which limits the rule of law as well as the application of assistance activities, ensures that Kandahar Province is an essential and representative location for investigations into causative factors for fluctuations and variations in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

5.4.1 Characteristics and cultural considerations for the people of Kandahar Province

The mentality of the people of Kandahar Province has been heavily influenced by the areas turbulent past. The province is a strategically important location; controlling the main trade route linking the Indian subcontinent with Persian Gulf (fostering an extensive history of connection with parts of India (now Pakistan), as well as to the Iranian people and rulers.) The city of Kandahar is one of the oldest cities in the world –extending back for over five thousand years – it has been fought over and changed hands a considerable number of times throughout history. (Notably, it was also the capital of the nascent Pashtun Afghanistan when the country was first formed in late 1740's.) This volatile and transitional history has helped foster the aggressive, competitive and dominating nature of the people of Kandahar. In conjunction to this, the importance of the province as a trade route has lead to the development of an opportunistic very business minded people. The people are highly motivated by money which they associate with power and authority (reflective of the previous status of authority that the Pashtuns held in Afghanistan). (Significantly there is a lack of willing to revert from PKR to AFN currency – a reflection of their lack of faith in the government.) Their forceful and warrior like attitudes has helped ensure that their tribal lineage – Mohammadzai - has ruled Afghanistan for more than a century; the Pashtuns of Kandahar are more familiar with being in dictating positions rather than being dictated too. The people crave and remember the traditional power structure which was based upon the influence of large landowning khans and their families. Their proud perspective of their courageous and superior past and their present 'under representation' in government has lead to the propagation of the concept of self reliance as a consequence of dislocation from the state and feelings of repression necessitating the need to reassert their authority.

Considerably more so than any other area investigated, the people are extremely defiant towards the present governmental structure of Afghanistan, believing that it has neither credibility nor authority. They respect forceful and megalomaniacal systems, and feel highly disenchanted with the 'corrupt government made up of drug dealers and criminals' – who show neither courage of conviction nor allegiance. Their lack of respect for weak and corrupt powers that operate outside of Pashtun ideals or priorities, is the most prominent agendum for Kandaharis – this is seen by their willingness to fight against the government, either passively through the cultivation of opium poppy (which they are totally unashamed about- believing that the government is not a viable force to stop them –fearing no reprisals for cultivation- and that the present security climate facilitates such actions), or through direct action through the assistance of AGF. In keeping with the concept of the indigenous lack of respect towards the 'international government', the interlocutors showed extensive appreciation of political systems and especially political manipulation and hidden agenda's, such as the US funded construction

of Dahla Dam being a consequence of the American desire to counter the positive activities of the then USSR in Afghanistan.

They are a heavily isolationist province – a consequence of their perspective of their superiority- and they show distinct ethnic preferences. Throughout recent history the area has been made up nearly solely of Pashtun Sunni Muslims, with minorities of Baluch nomads in the Southwest, and Hazara, Hindu and Uzbek. They still feel strongly about the initial reasons that formulated the North-South divide in Afghanistan and their pride in being ‘pure Pashtun’ fosters their resistance to outsiders and the present acceptance of Taliban ideals.

They are a highly traditional people - adhering to the more aggressive components of the Pashtunwali (Pre-Islamic code of honour). This aggression has led to a prioritization of warrior attributes over education, ensuring that most people perceive attainment and betterment as associated with an ability to exert authority over others, and ensures that they operate within the secondary motivational psychological stage. More so than other areas of investigation the occurrence of crime was rife, with disputes over land and water frequently leading to deaths. This is reflective of the tendency of the people not to adhere to community decisions but to be focused upon individual gain; this high level of competition is also explanative of the reasons for the multitude accounts of tribal rivalries (Pashtun versus Pashtun). This inter-ethnicity competition in conjunction to their perception of their rightfully exalted place in the country's power systems ensures that despite their lack of faith in the government they would rather not migrate externally as a coping strategy but rather they turn to crime; they are highly protective of their possessions.

Due to their business minded approach to life, they are more willing to relinquish the principles of Islam than other areas. Despite declaring their extreme piety (multiple accounts were made of adherence to fasting and prayers) – which is matter of deep pride to Pashtuns, as it is interpreted as signifying their superiority over other ethnicities - their lack of education in conjunction to their antecedent conditions facilitate an overriding priority for business so as to assume or retain power, meaning that they often do not have the capacity or inclination to fully relate to the Mullah's discussion (*Waz or Khutba*), and are not only vulnerable to extremism but are likely to adapt and be more open to *haram* influences, so as to fuel their continual strive to assert authority and to retain the luxuriant benefits of power – which has facilitated the high occurrence of addictive personalities (very high incidence of opium and addiction) and a desire for materialistic luxury commodities. The populace's inability to fully comprehend and live by Islamic teachings has fostered a climate of blame, were the people fail to take responsibility for the high crime levels and the cultivation of *haram* products (which include, opium poppy, cannabis and tobacco- they cultivate considerably more illegal crops than other areas of the country), preferring instead to place responsibility onto a scapegoat, the government.

Of course one can not under emphasize that the pre-conditional psychology of Kandahar people has been negatively attuned for utilization by AGF, who aggravate the vulnerabilities and disenchantment of these people. The Taliban has created a permissive environment for both their activities and other AGF, through their emphasis of the antecedent circumstances of the people of Kandahar Province. (AGF cleverly play upon the fact that throughout the whole of Afghanistan, history is not simply a story of past events, but a living, continual experience, to be carefully tended; its meanings, lessons and resentments preserved and nurtured.) The Pashtun South feel that life was better under the Taliban, and whilst the populace do view contradictions in the objectives of the AGF, some of the opportunistic business people of Kandahar are willing to take advantage of both AGF encouraging opium poppy cultivation (as a means to undermine government rule of law) as well as the opportunities to accrue off-farm income by mercenary operations. In addition to these factors the relatively low education levels in the South facilitate ‘brain washing’ of sections of the Kandahar populace, by Taliban calls for ‘*jihad*’ (struggle/resistance against unjust circumstances) on religious grounds.

5.4.2 Main reasons for the increase of opium poppy cultivation from pre-existing high cultivation levels

The overriding reasons for a stabilization in opium poppy cultivation is the pre-existing importance and infiltration of opium poppy cultivation into the income motivated business systems (processing and trafficking throughout the Southern provinces), in conjunction to the lack of respect for the central government and consequentially its ban; all of which is both fed and exacerbated by the volatile security situation.

Certain factors have proliferated opium poppy cultivation in Kandahar, namely the long history of opium cultivation which was introduced on a commercial scale by the influence of surrounding provinces (namely Hilmand cultivators who highlighted to the people of Kandahar Province the high income return), damage caused the USSR invasion which impaired the karez system -upon which the area was so heavily dependent- as well as the destabilization of the power base from which the Kandaharis had received so much reward. The importance of the influence of high cultivation levels in the surrounding provinces has been crucial to the increase and exploitation of the climate of instability; during the lancing season there is considerable migration for work within the Southern provinces, especially within Uruzgan, Hilmand and Kandahar Provinces. The longevity of the experience of opium poppy as a highly lucrative business venture has fostered their desire and ability to purchase luxury items; which the pride of the people so inclines them to strive for, and which many other crops can not cater for. The importance of the crop as an opportunistic business venture is highlighted by the fact that unlike other areas the decision to cultivate is made on an individual rather than community basis and is often dependent upon the decision of the landlord about what crops are cultivated, removing choice from the sharecroppers.

The drought conditions of the past few years have weakened the pre-existing agricultural income levels in the area. Previously, Kandaharis were able to utilize all their jiribs of land, whereas now they are only using a fraction of it (large sections of their land especially areas that are rain fed are unusable), a fact which is further aggravated by demographic pressures. As a coping strategy to overcome the drought induced circumstances, opium poppy provides copious off-farm incomes from daily labour work through inter-village, district and even province migration for work.

The lack of assistance, development and alternative livelihoods was also purported to be a main reason for the increase. Obviously this lack is proportional to the decline of the security conditions; with aid and development projects being targeted by AGF. In addition to this the lack of rule of law has hindered the success of campaigns such as DDR and DIAG (initiatives devised to stabilize and centralise power), which in turn perpetuates the security concerns and the relative inability for rehabilitation and development activities. (Afghanistan's government is highly aware of the security concerns regarding foreign workers and the current lack of safety and security measures in the volatile South.) Improvements in circumstances are further hindered by the harassment of the indigenous populace by both AGF and corrupt governmental institutions, consequentially the nascent economy has been hindered – discouraging consumers to travel into Kandahar and businessmen being bribed- all of which undermine the possibility of successfully implementing ALP and assistance programmes.

Also of importance is the perception that the CN law and the associated eradication is an international campaign, formulated to benefit the international community rather than Afghanistan. Locals perceive eradication to be motivated and orchestrated by foreigners, (often assumed to be organised by ISAF/ Coalition forces), which causes resentment amongst the populace and encourages an atmosphere of defiance.

5.4.3 Overall perception about the of increase of opium poppy cultivation

The people of Kandahar accept and tolerate the increase in opium poppy cultivation, as they feel that it is a direct consequence of the failure of the government to provide anything but negative prospects for them; they must act with their own initiative to fund and support their lives.

Whilst the people do feel some remorse over the cultivation of opium poppy – expressing a concern over its *haram* status, the impact that it has upon drug addiction levels in the provinces, as well as being fully cognizant of the nexus with corruption in government and the funding of AGF, - they continually stated that the lack of water and support limited the option to diversify or to resume previously cultivated crops. Most people think that the ban is ‘good’ as it complies with Islamic teachings, however without support they feel no shame in cultivation increasing and stabilizing at a maximum. This attitude is leading to well established vineyards being dug up and the land prepared for opium poppy production; a scenario which is most prevalent in areas under the control of AGF (Panjwai district is a contemporary example of this transition, as well as being increasingly penetrated and controlled by AGF).

The interlocutors found the attitude of the government towards opium poppy to be hypocritical; suggesting that the government should apply Sharia Law and remove corruption. They do not feel that either the international community or the government are serious about the ban, stating that ‘if the international community wants a reduction then they would change the government’. The disparity in eradication levels and the corruption associated with the bans enforcement further propagates the disregard for a law that is perceived as subjective. The entrenched corruption means that negotiation and bribery is endemic throughout eradication campaigns; with the amounts payable to district administrators or police, depending upon the influence of the person -often the payment is agreed to be made with money from the yields. (Opium poppy cultivation has become further entrenched in the business mentality of the people due to the corruption over eradication; communities join together as a co-op and decide which low yield fields to offer for eradication, whilst collectively giving money for the bribe.) In addition to the lack of resolve of the formal institutions to enforce the ban, it is also noticeable that leaders of informal institutions are also flouting the law and cultivating; if it is an acceptable crop for the village elders then ‘the people follow suit’. (N.B. The respondents made comparisons to the Taliban’s ban – which was successfully forcefully enforced.)

5.4.4 Awareness of the Counter Narcotics campaign: information dissemination

The interlocutors were all fully aware of the ban, gathering their information from the district governor and radio and television campaigns run by the provincial government.

All respondents noted that the district governors had been invited to Kandahar City by the Provincial Governor and were informed of the ban and the expected role that they and their communities had to fulfil. It was then expected that through village elders and Shuras that the information would be further disseminated. The respondents stated an awareness of the start of the campaign due to a large scale rotation of the district governors. The populace was informed that the governor was encouraging assistance to coincide with the ban. The eradication programme was announced in December 2005 by District Governor, (UNODC, 2006b).

The populace showed little appreciation of the consequences of breaching the ban apart from possible eradication.

It should be noted that the TA were aware of the main public information CN campaign theme; the negative consequences of opium in terms of drug addiction. However, whilst being aware of the viscous cycle of addiction and cultivation (comments made about lancers sucking the resin as they work), this was insufficient to deter them. The interlocutors also showed a heightened

awareness of the detrimental role that opium poppy cultivation had upon levels of corruption in government as well as funding AGF activities.

5.4.5 Alternative Livelihood Projects and assistance

Due to a combination of security reasons and antecedent opium cultivation levels Kandahar has been assigned considerable bi-lateral and national assistance (i.e. 22millionUSD for ALP), however the effectuality of the initiation and dissemination of the assistance has been extremely retarded by the restrictive security conditions of the province. The main bilateral agencies and NGO's in the area offering rural assistance are AHDS, CIDA, USAID, WFP as well as activities led by the PRT.

The main areas of agricultural assistance that the interlocutors expressed a necessity for, was -in decreasing order - improved seeds and fertilizer, irrigation systems, agricultural administration in each districts (including micro-finance systems), agricultural machinery and access to markets (which is at present limited by AGF blockades and bribery at every road side check points by officials working for the government).

In addition to the agricultural requests, there were also requests for clinics and schools; there has been considerably less construction of clinics and schools funded by NGO's in comparison to other provinces.

Apart from health activities led by the PRT and AHDS, the NSP was the only other provider of aid that the people were cognizant of their activities. The NSP programme had provided some farmers with sacks of improved seeds and half sacks of UREA and DAP fertilizers. (Although mention was also made that some of the sacks had been sold by governmental officials and commanders in the local bazaars). The interlocutors also mentioned that there had been a minor amount of road construction and culverts in some districts, but again they were unsure of which body funded this.

The main activities of the assistance providers have been in regards to the creation of ALP databases (such as those under construction by UNAIMS and PEP). It is hoped that whilst the security situation is at present limiting, that agencies are taking advantage of this period of relative inactivity to fully research the area and its antecedent agriculture so as to ensure that when/if the security situation permits, that the provision of appropriate and directed assistance and ALP may be provided. With this in mind, this research gathered information on previous agricultural crops and the agricultural conditions; responses highlighted the presence of extensive –albeit defunct- irrigation networks, larger than average land holdings, extensive horticulture in conjunction to well established international markets (especially for grapes). The main international commercial crops are grapes, (Mewand, Panjwai and Zhari districts yield 60% of the total grapes produced in Afghanistan), pomegranates and almonds. Also of importance are melons, cotton, cumin, olives, sesame, sunflower and wheat.

The sampled population expressed a desire for cumin cultivation to be encouraged. They referred to the utilization of cumin – especially black cumin – as a potential major cash crop to replace opium poppy. Saffron was also mentioned, although a caveat must be expressed that saffron is a low yield crop and demand is restricted. India and China are the main cultivators of cumin in Asia and accessibility to Saffron is already high in neighbouring Iran (Chomchalow, 2001)

5.4.6 Impact of ALP upon the decision of farmers to cultivate opium poppy

Assistance and ALP activities have had an insignificant positive effect upon the populations' decision to cultivate opium poppy; this is mainly due to the lack of tangible assistance - a repercussion of the poor security situation which limits aid and development campaign dissemination.

It should be noted that assistance is seen as a precursor to non-cultivation.

In comparison to other provinces the populace are relatively unaware of the level of assistance offered to other provinces.

5.4.7 Consequences of opium poppy cultivation

The main consequences of opium poppy cultivation is that it has become further accepted as a lucrative business within Kandahar Province; people buy opium on the market and then store it awaiting price increases (beware that it does not become the currency of the South), inter-province trading is the main off-farm income, as well as co-op systems being developed to pay government bribes for non-eradication.

Opium poppy cultivation has provided the indigenous population with greater access to credit systems, with a positive repression on the household debt levels. Debt levels highlight a considerable disparity with those presently not cultivating in other parts of Afghanistan. Noticeably people that have reduced their cultivation this year have experienced problems with debt repayments - which encourages re-cultivation next year.

Respondents stated that opium poppy cultivation had helped offset the potential negative consequences of the drought on their income. It should be clarified that many people mentioned that they were storing their opium until prices inflated; this may be the present reason for the slight decrease in income.

Cultivation has also facilitated increased contact with outsider traders (such as those from Iran and Pakistan), encouraging a cyclical and self-perpetuating illicit industry.

5.4.8 The future of opium poppy cultivation in Kandahar

From the culmination of interlocutors' intentions as well as the analysis of the information obtained, it can be deduced that there is a clear indication that the future opium poppy levels in Kandahar will stabilize at a maximum or near maximum capacity, (2005 cultivation was assumed to have attained this level), this belies reductions in more secure districts around Kandahar, and increases in remote places. Within this broad conclusion, there are however two fluctuations that may occur.

The first scenario advocates that next year's cultivation may be recorded as slightly lower than this year, due to provincial-led eradication around the district centre, as well as the negative impact that disease and nutrient deficiencies (causing a lower than expected yield this year) has had upon farmers' reliance and attitude towards the crop, which may encourage farmers to choose a crop that is not vulnerable to those particular diseases - blights included: Root Knot, Nematodes, Capsule Caterpillar, Fungal Disease. Eradication levels were verified to be 22% (second highest levels in the country) of the national total, however this is reflective of the massive increase in cultivation this year, (UNODC, 2006b).

However, taking into account that the factors that promote the sustaining of high opium poppy cultivation in the area and facilitated the increase of 162% last year, still prevail, it is also

highly plausible that an increase will be experienced next year (and in the foreseeable future unless key issues are addressed and curbed). The disassociation and discontent with the government (Central, Provincial and District) has led to the lack of rule of law and the acceptance of the governments laws. At present the government has no control and Central Afghan rule remains little more than symbolic. This attrition of support towards the government has led to increasing support for the AGF due to support of their objective to remove the government, (however, contrary to the other AGF objectives the populace do want the international community to stay in Afghanistan and to support the people). Of importance is the fact that those persons who experienced eradication this year, 'now totally support AGF', and when one considers that AGF are encouraging cultivation, to highlight defiance to the government ban (although not always offering reciprocal protection), in conjunction to the increased pervasiveness of AGF and perception of the lack of resolve of the government to enforce the ban in totality, it seems likely that an increase in cultivation will occur in areas under AGF control.

The lack of assistance and aid will further hinder regression of opium cultivation levels, a fact which is intrinsically linked to the security situation; which continues to experience a downward spiral. AGF activity (and their objectives to destabilize the province and to halt all government or international led rehabilitation) and the consequential physical threats to organizing bodies and their personnel, ensure that only minor benefits and assistance activities occur. This is exemplified by the restrictions upon movement to markets for licit purposes due to AGF activities (a point which is further exacerbated by the number of times that officials request bribes at check points). In addition to the intimidation of agencies, AGF also conducts intimidation of the indigenous people (doctors are not running clinics and teachers are not running schools due to threats, and fear by the population to use these facilities), which all culminates in the very limited scope of assistance to achieve tangible benefits for the communities of Kandahar Province.

In addition to security problems and the relative lack of the rule of law, the proximity of Kandahar Province to major processing plants and trafficking and trading networks makes the province even more vulnerable to future high levels of cultivation of opium poppy. Whilst at present the system is not set up as an organized crime syndicate (unlike Hilmand) there are definitely indications that this may alter in the future; with the consequential effect on cultivation levels. There is considerable pressure on farmers to cultivate more opium from Kandahar city traders with connections in other Southern provinces.

An extra exacerbation is the drought conditions that are prevailing nationwide. With the predicted continuation of the drought and the specific mention in FEWS NET (2006) at the beginning of the year that the South will have insufficient water for wheat cultivation the provinces prospects for alternative agricultural incomes are bleak. The severity of the water issue is exemplified by the *Mirab* (traditional community water manager) – no longer functioning – leading to the prevalence of disputes which frequently result in mortalities. Despite the fact that Kandahar Province has relatively high jerib sizes/hh, due to the shortage of water, much land is left fallow and so extra pressure is placed upon high value yields from lesser area sizes.

The combination of the regions infamous insecurity, lack of acceptance or respect for the 'corrupt and unrepresentative internationally approved' government, the continued drought and lack of assistance or developments of alternatives has led to most inhabitants of Kandahar feeling extremely pessimistic about the future of individual, community, district, provincial and national futures. With such a bleak perception, the people are preconditioned to take advantage of the opportunity to grow opium poppy, and unfortunately in the future more accounts of the removal and levelling of well established vineyards for opium poppy cultivation will continue.

A caveat should be expressed that numerous opium poppy cultivators mentioned that cannabis levels were also likely to increase, as it is a suitable third crop (after opium and water melons respectively) and is easily exportable to Pakistan. Cannabis already constitutes a substantial crop in the province, and in those areas where it is not presently grown they admitted to have already started to discuss its future cultivation.

6 Methodology

Initially, research was conducted into which provinces or regions would fulfil four key criteria essential for in-depth opium poppy cultivation comparisons:

1. An area that had high levels of opium poppy cultivation but has undergone a recent and considerable decrease: Nangarhar Province (priority province for the research),
2. An area that previously had high levels of opium poppy cultivation and still experiences high levels of cultivation: Kandahar Province,
3. An area that previously had low levels of opium poppy cultivation levels but has recently experienced a considerable increase: Balkh Province,
4. An area that has maintained low or non-existent levels of opium poppy cultivation: Central Region – Kapisa, Logar, Parwan Provinces.

Specific locations within these areas were chosen through a systematic random approach, ensuring a variety of agricultural, social and economic conditions.

Research was then conducted into livelihood/coping strategies, historic profiling, community mapping, climatic and physical factors and institutional and social network analysis within the chosen areas. This facilitated the formulation of semi-structured questionnaires - which built upon pre-existing socio-economic information collected through numerous UNODC surveys - and devised so as to allow an insight into the indigenous populace's psyche. Additional to this initial secondary research, extensive use was made of the regional UNODC staff's knowledge about their area of operation. (Considerable care was taken to explain the purpose of the work and the style of questioning that would be utilized, as it was an approach which the staff were unfamiliar with. Attention was also paid to ascertaining the most suitable style of communication for different ethnic and social groups.)

Key persons were then identified for questioning, these included; farmers (land owners and sharecroppers), women were possible, money lenders, village elders and members of the village Shura's, mullahs, Provincial Council members, Police Chief's, District Governors, Poppy Elimination Programme teams (PEP), international NGO's, Ministers – Counter Narcotics, Agriculture, Rural Rehabilitation and Development - and notable influential public figures. This diverse range, allowed a sample of most ethnic, social and economic levels of society as well as a broad spectrum of stakeholders and peripheral actors.

Field work was completed in a four month period, at the end of opium poppy harvesting season. At the beginning of every discussion it was clearly explained that the purpose was not to offer the people any tangible reward for their honesty and time, but purely to conduct research so as to better understand the populace. No mention was made of the focus of the questions being on opium poppy cultivation, with the intention to relax and build trust with the interlocutors and limit biased and untruthful answers motivated by personal agenda's. (Calibration of responses was conducted through duplicate questions during the interview as well explanatory discussions with colleagues.)

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the locations in which the interviews took place, emphasis was placed upon a very informal atmosphere with no time restriction (many interviews lasted for three or more hours). Interviews were conducted within a group setting (similar to the traditional style of conversation and debate) often held either in the households entertaining room (*Mehmaan Khana*) or sitting outside in the shade amongst the fields (*Dera*). In Kandahar –due to UN security restrictions – interviewees were invited to the UNODC office. Questions were asked via a translator. Discussion was encouraged so as to gauge as many divergent topics as possible that people felt affected their lives.

Conclusion

The 2002 CN Law has had limited success on the reduction of illicit cultivation of opium in Afghanistan. This disappointment is a consequence of the prevailing socio-economic conditions and psychologies of the TA, in conjunction to variable implementation of assistance programmes (national and international), attitudes towards the government (at all levels), security conditions and failings within the CN campaign.

A number of different socio-economic, environmental and political variables are considered by the indigenous population before opting to cultivate, and these variables are given different weightings by different socio-economic and spatial groups dependent upon their psychological motivations. In a country both recovering from a regressive and turbulent recent past as well as its conjunctive notoriety for difficulties in the achievement of unification, there is a paramount need not to generalize the factors that control or influence the vulnerability of a farmer to grow opium poppy. It can not be over emphasised that attention must be drawn to the divergent considerations that are included in the indigenous risk decisions; only through familiarization with the TA will it be possible to ensure acquiescence with the opium law.

To ensure that future CN efforts and campaigns achieve a sustainable reduction it is essential that attention is drawn to promoting a positive understanding of the CN goal and particularly, appealing to specific objectives and motivations of the people, an approach that can only be realised through the provision of pervasive and appropriate bilateral and national assistance. Opium poppy growth is still one of the most accessible coping strategies available to large segments of the rural population; however, policy makers should not underestimate the impetus and resilience of the Afghan population. The successful implementation of the CN law in Afghanistan will only be achievable in the shortest possible time -with the least resistance, - if the desire comes from the people and their understanding about why it is necessary and what beneficial alternatives are available to them. This requires an understanding of the main hindrances to the ban – on all levels- and can only be achieved if security concerns – which hinder the implementation of the rule of law - are controlled and governance is pro-active and honest in its dedication to the ban. Without these conditions the success of the CN law will continue to prove elusive.

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