Experiences and Expectations in Community-Driven Development: Monitoring Research on Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project

Assess, Transform, Reach Consulting

ACBAR's Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan Series

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Cover Photo: Community development council members selecting their office bearers in Kunduz province. Photograph taken by Mursalin Dard and provided by courtesy of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
AEWG	Aid Effectiveness Working Group
AHDS	Afghanistan Health and Development Services
ATR	Assess, Transform, Reach Consulting
CCAP	Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project
CCNPP	Citizens' Charter National Priority Program
CCDC	Cluster Community Development Council
CDC	Community Development Council
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CLDD	Community Led Development Department
DCCMC	District Citizens' Charter Management Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Facilitating Partner
FPRG	Facilitating Partner Representative Group
GA	Gozar Assembly
HRAIS	High Risk Areas Implementation Strategy
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IWA	Integrity Watch Afghanistan
KII	Key Informant Interview
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO/RRAA	Norwegian Project Office / Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
NSP	National Solidarity Program
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SDO	Sanayee Development Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citizens' Charter is a model for community engagement and aims to bridge the gap between the government and the people by providing mechanisms for citizens to make their voices heard and to take part in decisions affecting the future development of their communities. This report represents the findings of a study commissioned by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) — with support from the World Bank, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), and Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) — to assess the implementation of the Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP) to date.

Considering the available resources, the research was envisioned as a series of limited case studies or snapshots of project implementation in three provinces — Balkh, Parwan, and Zabul — supplemented heavily by interviews and workshops conducted in Kabul. Given the limitations of the scope of this study, findings should not be taken to be representative of Citizens' Charter as a whole. Rather, they represent a snapshot of experiences and perceptions related to the programme in a limited number of locations and raise questions and considerations for further research. To the extent that other actors outside of the study locations find themselves experiencing similar challenges, they can use the considerations of this study to seek solutions moving forward. Likewise, where the positive trends are more broadly shared, efforts may be taken to further enhance those strengths.

On the whole, the programme has been quite well received by the target communities. When the infrastructure components are designed and constructed properly — such that they respond to the communities' needs and avoid capture by powerful interests — this aspect of the programme is widely appreciated. Additionally, communities have already begun to report certain social changes, highlighting new roles for women in their communities and explaining how greater awareness of poverty has contributed to active efforts to help alleviate challenges for the most vulnerable community members. On the institutional side, CCAP has helped create a framework for cooperation between various ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Education (MoE), and Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), along with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), which are responsible for leading the rural and urban components of CCAP respectively.

The actual rollout of CCAP was constrained by an evolving security environment that made project implementation significantly more difficult in many locations than had originally been anticipated during the planning stages. While an effort to adapt to some of these changes was reflected in the development of the High Risk Areas Implementation Strategy (HRAIS), the strategy was not widely applied and, consequently, its impact has been limited thus far.

Both insecurity and cultural norms continue to constrain the role of women in CCAP. In the most severe cases, this was reported to include the falsification of data related to the participation of women in elections or the CDCs: female office bearers at times only hold their positions on paper, with the positions being left empty or filled by some male community member in their stead. The

lack of women's education in many communities further constrains participation, while cultural restrictions on the ability of women to participate in physical labour inhibit their ability to benefit fully from the wages of the day labourers who help to construct or rehabilitate the infrastructure that is financed through the CCAP. Questions remain regarding how CCAP can best engage with female community members to ensure that they are active participants throughout the entire Citizens' Charter process.

On the other hand, the pro-poor emphasis of CCAP was readily apparent. Respondents recognized that reducing poverty was a key objective of CCAP, and key components of both social mobilisation and infrastructure delivery were reported to serve this objective. The wellbeing analysis and seasonal calendar exercises were noted as being effective for identifying the households most in need of support in the various communities. This then translated into priority for wage labour during the construction of project infrastructure, as well as benefits linked to the grain banks as the newly established mechanism helped to channel donations to those in need. The most significant barrier to the participation of poor community members was generally perceived to be their inability to sacrifice time away from work for the volunteer activities during social mobilisation or the continued CDC and subcommittee processes. This barrier was less relevant for the poorest community members, since many of them lacked any form of employment which might interfere with their ability to participate.

Respondents did not seem to fully understand the way in which the community development planning process feeds into the decisions regarding funding, as well as the role of minimum service standards (MSS) and other questions of feasibility play in determining project financing. Thus, decisions by the provincial management unit (PMU) engineers to substitute one project for another were viewed as disregard for the preferences of community members.

As with any development programme, the resources provided through CCAP have the potential to feed into local power politics and provide a new avenue for rent-seeking and corruption. Likewise, pressure was reported from the Taliban to divert the funding and adapt implementation modalities (particularly with regard to the social mobilisation exercises and full involvement of women).

On the whole, Citizens' Charter appears to target the needs of individuals and communities in a way that is meaningful and well-received. The processes and tools involved can be quite beneficial when implemented properly, but rigorous implementation is not always evident and proper mechanisms for following up and ensuring accountability would benefit from being strengthened. For the soft components, this could include steps to address inflated figures for voter turnout and participation in the various social mobilisation exercises; for the hard component, further efforts to combat corruption or capture during the subproject approval process would serve to improve community perceptions of the process.

Building on these findings, the following are a summary of the report's recommendations:
1. Clarify the programmatic vision and narrative to address confusion about CCAP's priorities.
2. Revisit the standards for facilitation to ensure they are feasible and prepare contingency plans to guide responses in instances where they are not met.
3. Clarify redlines, or limits to acceptable behaviour, for all project actors.

4. Discuss the evolution of roles in Phases 2 and 3 of the Citizens' Charter and refine the handover process between FPs and PMUs for rural areas.

5. Provide more information during the community development planning process to better manage community expectations.

6. Prepare for Citizens' Charter to become a permanent platform for the provision of minimum service standards to all citizens by establishing long-term authorities and funding streams, and integrating those structures within the larger planning and budgeting processes.

7. Review the existing subnational governance structures (CDCs, CCDCs, GAs, etc.) to identify which structures have the most support and use that information to guide institutional development and rationalise all government engagement with its citizens.

8. Revise the subcommittee structure to reduce the burden on small communities.

9. Renew the conversation on safeguarding and 'Do No Harm,' to ensure that programme activities do not pass the risks associated with implementation onto the communities.

10. Invest in permanent government capacity by more thoroughly involving civil servants in trainings and policy-level discussions.

11. Tailor training curricula and lengths to the knowledge and education levels of training participants.

12. Detach the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit from the rural PMUs to enhance their ability to provide independent, unbiased assessments of PMU performance.

13. Strengthen the mechanisms for dissemination and uptake of M&E findings.

14. Establish / strengthen the ability for community members to bypass their CDC when submitting a complaint about the CDC itself.

15. Prepare a strategic communications campaign to counter corruption and misinformation.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This report represents the findings of a study commissioned by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) — with support from the World Bank, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), and Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) — to assess the implementation of the Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP) to date. The monitoring research was conducted under the auspices of the Aid Effectiveness Working Group (AEWG), which was established by ACBAR after the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in 2016 in order to conduct independent, civil society-led monitoring and research. The AEWG is composed of both NGO members of ACBAR and non-member NGOs.

As the first phase of the Citizens' Charter National Priority Program (CCNPP), CCAP has carried out development and governance activities across approximately one-third of Afghanistan, delivering services and infrastructure through a process that has actively involved communities in decision-making and project implementation.

The specific objectives of the study, as laid out in the terms of reference, were to:
- Review the extent to which the Afghan government is programmatically on-track with the implementation of CCAP.
- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the roles and responsibilities of the following actors in CCAP's cycle: CDCs, Sub-Committees and Social Organisers.[1]
- Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the poverty analysis and needs assessments.
- Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the community development planning (e.g. vision, milestones and activities).
- Review the development processes in communities on participation (e.g. election), inclusion, learning and action-orientation, transparency and accountability, especially on pro-poor and pro-women collective action.
- Assess the community participatory monitoring, evaluation, social audit and grievances handling processes of CDCs.
- Assess if the participation mechanism of CCAP's cycle contributes to an increase in citizen satisfaction and trust in the government and other stakeholders such as (I)NGOs.
- Identify the challenges of a least developed country in a protracted conflict such as insecurity, social exclusion and others and in which level they have constrained the roll out of CCAP and the associated lessons learned.

The terms of reference were designed by ACBAR, in collaboration with the World Bank, SCA, and IWA, based on the shared objectives of these partners. It was acknowledged, however, that the project's budget constraints would not allow for definitive answers to be developed on these points: field data collection was limited to qualitative interviews and focus group discussions in just three provinces. Consequently, the project does not aim to measure efficiency and effectiveness directly,

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[1] Due to uncertainties about the extent to which clusters had been operationalized, cluster CDCs and gozar assemblies were not included in this list. Their progress was noted by ACBAR and the AEWG Monitoring Board as a point of interest, however, so what information ATR could obtain regarding their current status was also included in this report.

but rather to identify what is or is not efficient or effective about the systems that are in place. The findings were then distilled into the narrative of conditions, lessons learned, and recommendations that makes up Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the report.

Given the limitations of the scope of this study, findings should not be taken to be representative of Citizens' Charter as a whole. Rather, they represent a snapshot of experiences and perceptions related to the programme in a limited number of locations and raise questions and considerations for further research. To the extent that other actors outside of the study locations find themselves experiencing similar challenges, they can use the considerations of this study to seek solutions moving forward. Likewise, where the positive trends are more broadly shared, efforts may be taken to further enhance those strengths.

Finally, given the nature of the provinces selected (Balkh, Parwan, and Zabul) and the limited coverage of the urban model of CCAP thus far, recommendations will be skewed somewhat to focus on the rural model of the programme. Nevertheless, Mazar-e-Sharif was included in the study, and interviews with various actors at the national level provide a basis for some preliminary observations about the urban model. To the extent that these help to guide further research and programmatic adaptations, they will have served their objective.

SECTION 2: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The research design was guided primarily by the terms of reference provided by ACBAR, SCA, and IWA. Considering the available resources, the research was envisioned as a series of limited case studies or snapshots of project implementation in three provinces, supplemented heavily by interviews and workshops conducted in Kabul. The assignment included a desk and literature review — reviewing project documents and analysing the findings from other studies[2] — and original, primary research in the form of consultations with key stakeholders and interviews or focus group discussions with community members.

The primary data collection involved interviews with relevant officials at key ministries and provincial government offices, as well as interviews and group discussions with community members, facilitating partners, and other stakeholders at the community level. Consultations were also conducted in the form of two workshops with facilitating partners in December 2019: one with country directors focused on strategic questions and the other with package managers addressing practical questions of implementation. As a result, this study features the voices of civil society representatives quite prominently.

For the provincial-level data collection, three provinces were selected in consultation with ACBAR and approved by the members of the AEWG Monitoring Board. These provinces were Balkh, Parwan, and Zabul. Key considerations in their selection are presented in Table 1, below:

Table 1: Province selection matrix

Selection Criteria	Balkh	Parwan	Zabul
Geographic location	North	Central	South
Ethnic diversity and distribution	Heterogeneous (Tajiks represent largest group, but substantial diversity)	Sheikh Ali: Homogenous (Hazara) Siya Gird: Heterogeneous (Pashtun, Tajik, and other smaller groups)	Homogenous (Pashtun)
Rural / Urban model	Urban + Rural	Rural	Rural
Size / Type of FPs	International NGO + small / medium national NGO	Large national NGO	Small / medium national NGO
Level of security	Relatively secure	Relatively secure	Relatively insecure
Accessibility	Accessible	Accessible	Accessible

Since the urban model of Citizens' Charter has thus far only been implemented in the cities of Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif, province selection was constrained to include one of those cities. In addition, since ATR had conducted far more extensive data collection for a study on

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[2] This included existing literature about the National Solidarity Project (the predecessor to the Citizens' Charter) as well as literature on community-driven development more generally.

Citizens' Charter's relationship with conflict and fragility,[3] the decision was made to avoid duplicating those provinces in an effort to maximize the project's contribution to the collective understanding of Citizens' Charter.

Map 1: Selected provinces and districts
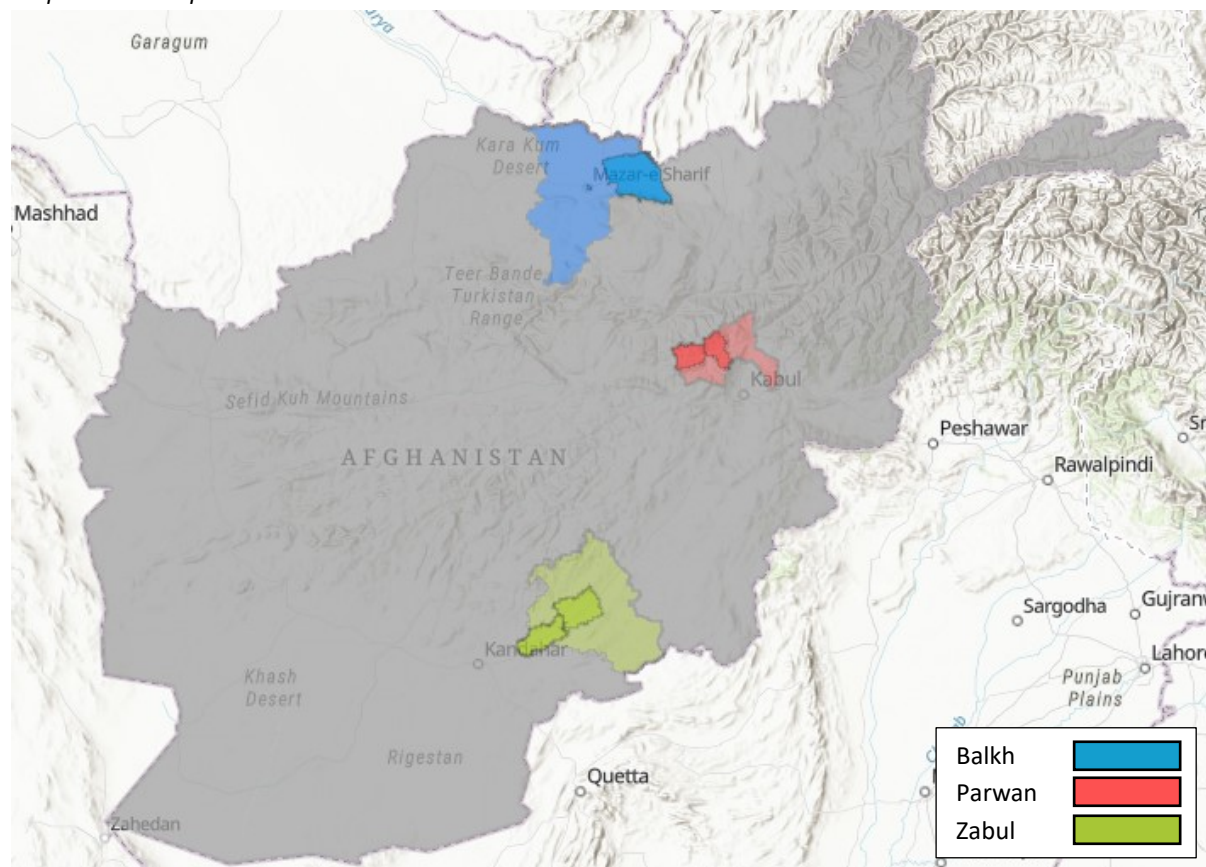
Phase 1 of CCAP was designed to cover approximately one third of the country over the course of four years, from 2016 to 2020, with the rest of the country covered in subsequent phases over the following six years. As such, only certain districts within these provinces have been targeted by the MRRD-led implementation of the programme thus far. These districts were selected for Phase 1 through a presidential consultative process with provincial governors. In both Parwan and Zabul, which each only had two districts included in Phase 1 of Citizens' Charter, ATR visited both of the targeted districts. In Balkh, where four districts had been included in the rural portion of Phase 1, data collection was limited to one district (Khulm), as well as the municipality of Mazar-e-Sharif. Khulm was selected because it was one of the two districts in Balkh where the implementation was being led by ACTED (to get the experience of a large, international NGO as facilitating partner – FP), and was relatively more secure than the district of Marmul (trying to balance the experiences of Siya Gird and Tarnak wa Jaldak, in particular).

By province, the targeted districts / municipalities were:

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[3] This World Bank-funded study covered five districts / municipalities: Herat City, Herat; Panjwayi, Kandahar; Matun, Khost; Aliabad, Kunduz; and Jalrez, Wardak. Data collection for that assignment included nearly 1,000 interviews and focus group discussions, as well as a 1,600-respondent survey.

- Balkh – Khulm, Mazar-e-Sharif
- Parwan – Sheikh Ali, Siya Gird
- Zabul – Qalat, Tarnak wa Jaldak

The districts and communities selected for inclusion in Phase 1 of CCAP were typically the most secure and accessible locations in their respective provinces (at least at the time of selection). Those conditions were generally met in the targeted communities in both Balkh and Zabul (Mazar-e-Sharif and Qalat are the provincial centres, while Khulm and Tarnak wa Jaldak are readily accessible along major roads from these centres). In Parwan, however, the programmatic decision was made to prioritise two of the most remote and least developed districts in the province during Phase 1.

Altogether, primary data collection included 121 interviews and focus group discussions (10 in Kabul and 37 in each province), as well as 2 workshops with representatives from the facilitating partner NGOs. The collected data were analysed using Atlas.ti software, allowing for coding and categorisation of findings according to key themes. Through presentations to the Aid Effectiveness Working Group, its Monitoring Board, and the World Bank, as well as workshops with representatives from most of the facilitating partner NGOs, preliminary findings were given further context and nuance.

SECTION 3: FINDINGS

A. Project Model and Design

Citizens' Charter is a model for community engagement that aims to bridge the gap between the government and the people by providing mechanisms for citizens to make their voices heard and to take part in decisions affecting the future development of their communities. While a prominent feature of CCAP is the construction of infrastructure designed to help communities attain certain minimum service standards (MSS) related to clean drinking water, electricity, road access / improvement, small-scale irrigation infrastructure (in rural areas), waste management, and other communal services (in urban areas),[4] the way by which this process is accomplished creates a framework for continued engagement and cooperation. This can be seen in the roles of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Education (MoE), and Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) within Citizens' Charter, as the ministries continue their longstanding commitment to improve agriculture, education, and health services respectively using the Citizens' Charter framework to better meet the needs of communities and enhance responsiveness.

Citizens' Charter builds upon the foundations laid by three phases of the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which was Afghanistan's flagship community-driven development (CDD) project from 2003 to 2016. [5] NSP's design and evolution was, in turn, linked to the broader debate about the optimal manner in which to pursue CDD. Key advantages attributed to the CDD model include:

- Greater efficiency, due to the incorporation of local knowledge into project planning and implementation;
- Community empowerment, through active community engagement and decision-making;
- Enhanced accountability and resistance to capture / corruption, since communities have an incentive to ensure that funds are used appropriately; and
- Programmatic robustness, since challenges or failures in one community do not necessarily doom the rest of the programme.[6]

Citizens' Charter seeks local knowledge-based efficiency through community engagement during social mobilisation (described in greater detail on page 25). This participatory process is designed, in part, to ensure that all segments of a community have a voice in the prioritisation process and that key obstacles to converting investments in infrastructure into larger economic returns are identified proactively. The recruitment of local workers and requirement for community contribution also serve to lower the overall costs of the programme, ideally contributing to both efficiency and sustainability.

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[4] A comprehensive list of the minimum service standards for rural and urban locations may be found in the CCAP Operations Manual.

[5] The National Solidarity Program was rolled out to 35,000 communities over the course of approximately thirteen years.

[6] Susan Wong and Scott Guggenheim, "Community-Driven Development: Myths and Realities," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8435 (2018) provides details on each of these general arguments, although the authors frame them somewhat differently.

Not only is this programme designed to give community members a voice in planning for their community's development, but the process of infrastructure delivery — from the initial trainings on procurement and accounting to the process of constructing the infrastructure itself — should serve to build the capacity of community members and provide them with a basis for more thorough engagement with future development work in their communities. Community empowerment through the Citizens' Charter is not absolute, however, and the restrictions on subproject selection in rural communities makes this most apparent, particularly since the projects are subject to approval by the engineers from the provincial management unit (PMU) based on questions of technical feasibility and alignment with the core minimum service standards.

Efforts to leverage community engagement to promote accountability permeate the design of Citizens' Charter. During the mobilisation stage, the participatory nature of the wellbeing analysis and community development planning process are two key methods aimed at preventing the capture of resources. Likewise, when election units effectively capture the various segments of a community, they serve to ensure that each of these groups are represented on the CDC. Other mechanisms include social audits of CDC performance, scorecards for the rating of service delivery, and mechanisms for lodging complaints regarding any aspect of the programme.

Finally, Citizens' Charter does feature aspects of modular robustness. While CCNPP was designed to cover the entire country over the course of three phases, the ability to continue in certain locations while suspending operations in others does exist. The main challenge is that FP funding is linked to success in the communities where they work, so failure could lead to cashflow issues that constrain their ability to implement the work elsewhere.

In recent years, CDD has also been proposed as a more effective way to deliver aid in conflict zones and other fragile settings, due to challenges associated with the implementation of large, centralised projects. Such considerations are clearly relevant for Afghanistan, although due to its size, as well as its menu restrictions and social mobilisation requirements, Citizens' Charter appears to be somewhat less agile than some of the smaller CDD programmes. Additionally, some CDD programmes — including both NSP and CCNPP — feature objectives related to the promotion of effective governance and social cohesion.[7] While the relative priority of governance promotion compared to poverty alleviation may have shifted from NSP to CCNPP, the core task of establishing CDCs as the primary local governance entity at the community level (along with the new cluster CDCs and gozar assemblies) remains an essential objective of Citizens' Charter.

Evaluations to date have provided a mixed picture with regard to the success of CDD in attaining its various objectives.[8] In general, CDD has experienced more measurable success in the creation of

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[7] ATR's Conflict and Fragility study includes a much more comprehensive review of literature focused on questions of state legitimacy, social cohesion, and the particular opportunities and challenges faced by CDD programming in conflict settings.

[8] See, for example, Elisabeth King, "A Critical Review of Community-Driven Development Programmes in Conflict-Affected Contexts," International Rescue Committee and UK Aid (2013), which provides a secondary review of evaluations of CDD programmes in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia (Aceh), Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

physical infrastructure than in the attainment of certain social outcomes.[9] This is not surprising, given both the external factors which may complicate such efforts, the challenges of measuring such change, and the longer timeframe which might be required for social change to materialise, but it has called into question the efficacy of attempting to engineer social change through the delivery of small scale infrastructure projects. The outcomes observed in studies of NSP aligned with these more general trends, with infrastructure having been successfully delivered, but impacts on state legitimacy and social cohesion either being short-lived or insignificant.[10]

More generally, certain recommendations and considerations exist throughout the literature on CDD. Perhaps the most important is the significance of contextualisation for the success of the projects.[11] Given the range of settings in which CDD has been tried, understanding how the contextual factors which differentiate scenarios affect outcomes is key to tailoring a programme effectively. Significantly, CDD is not appropriate for all contexts and requires both a suitable political environment and the existence of larger primary and secondary infrastructure to maximise the returns of investing in small-scale infrastructure at the community level. To quote Wong and Guggenheim, *"CDD works best and achieves the greatest results when it is part of a broader development strategy that includes reforms to governance, investments in productivity, and integration with efforts to improve the quality of public service delivery."*[12] While some of the Citizens' Charter subprojects — such as water access or renewable energy supplies — can operate relatively autonomously, roads and irrigation still require development at a higher level in order to maximize their gains. Likewise, education and health care, which are included under the CCAP MSS need to be addressed through other programmes.[13]

Even when appropriate, CDD is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Different contexts may require differing levels of technical support, more or less extensive monitoring arrangements, and different degrees of flexibility or restriction on the use of block grants. Within the Citizens' Charter, the urban model offers much more flexibility in the use of the block grants, while subproject approval in the rural model is entirely need-based (and communities are not entitled to a block grant at all).

An associated challenge is that, while a definition of 'community' is often required for programmatic purposes, assuming a single definition for an entire country can result in artificial units that do not

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[9] Howard White, Radhika Menon, and Hugh Waddington, "Community-Driven Development: Does It Build Social Cohesion or Infrastructure? A Mixed-Method Evidence Synthesis," International Initiative for Impact Evaluation Technical Report (2018) and Wong and Guggenheim, "Community-Driven Development: Myths and Realities."

[10] Jasmine Bhatia, Naseem Jareer, and Ross McIntosh, "Community-Driven Development in Afghanistan: A Case Study of the National Solidarity Programme in Wardak," *Asian Survey* 58, no. 6 (2018): 1043.

[11] Adam Pain, "Using Village Context Analysis in Afghanistan: Methods and Wider Implications," Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium Working Paper 46 (2016) features a discussion of how this process could look specifically within the context of NSP and CCAP.

[12] Wong and Guggenheim, "Community-Driven Development: Myths and Realities," 31.

[13] For a conversation regarding the proposed linkage between service delivery and state legitimacy, see ATR's Conflict and Fragility study report.

reflect the underlying social structure.[14] In this regard, CCAP lives with decisions made during the NSP regarding community structure and funding, although some efforts have been made to reform the incentive structure to discourage unnecessary divisions within existing communities.

Studies on CDD have also highlighted possible risks associated with implementing such programmes in the middle of conflicts. Not only can insecurity constrain project implementation, but the programme itself risks becoming embroiled in the conflicts, allowing for the capture and/or politicisation of the programme and its services. In conflict-prone areas, communities have to balance benefits of accepting aid with risks that their participation will be perceived as a threat and lead to increases in violence.[15] When considering the principle of 'Do No Harm,' this complicates programmatic decisions, since efforts to improve the quality of life for a country's citizens may ultimately put them in harm's way. It also highlights the importance of taking intentional steps to insulate the project and make the infrastructure delivery resilient to the conflict.[16] Finally, care must be taken to ensure that CDD programming is not used as a substitute for "real engagement with the root causes of conflict."[17] Given the current security environment in Afghanistan, all of these are relevant considerations for Citizens' Charter. Concerns regarding the principle of 'Do No Harm' in particular are covered in greater detail in the sections on Security, below.

Another important consideration is related to the scope of programming. Both the size and timing of block grants matter,[18] since they affect the overall development impact of the programmes and the permanence of any social changes that might result. Likewise, if conditionality is to be incorporated into project design to incentivize proper implementation of a particular component, including a series of disbursements that take place over prolonged period of time provides the flexibility to either enforce or reward certain standards of performance. This is not possible with the current Citizens' Charter design, which generally limits communities to one or two subprojects implemented over the course of a single phase of the overall programme.

Both foresight and sustained commitment are required for the effective maintenance of infrastructure. Salomonsen and Diachok reported that operations and maintenance (O&M) arrangements tended to be most successful in single-sector projects, since the restricted scope of work allowed for clear ministerial responsibility.[19] In projects like Citizens' Charter, which spans services provided by numerous ministries, careful delineation of responsibilities over the longer

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[14] David J. Katz, "Community-Based Development in Rural Afghanistan: First, Assume a Community," United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks no. 127 (2017): 19-20.

[15] The relationship between CDD aid and violence is complicated. For examples focused on Afghanistan, see Bhatia, Jareer, and McIntosh, "Community-Driven Development in Afghanistan," and Andrew Beath, Fotini Christia, and Ruben Enikolopov, "Can Development Programs Counter Insurgencies? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan," MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2011-14 (2017).

[16] Jan Bachmann and Peer Schouten, "Concrete Approaches to Peace: Infrastructure as Peacebuilding," *International Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2018): 395.

[17] Bachmann and Schouten, "Concrete Approaches to Peace," 390.

[18] Wong and Guggenheim, "Community-Driven Development: Myths and Realities," 12-13.

[19] Andreas Salomonsen and Myrtle Diachok, "Operations and Maintenance of Rural Infrastructure in Community-Driven Development and Community-Based Projects: Lessons Learned and Case Studies of Good Practice," World Bank Social, Urban, Rural & Resilience Global Practice (2015): 44.

term would be important for efforts to sustain the benefits of the programme.

Commitment and foresight are also critical to attaining favourable outcomes related to governance. One issue highlighted in the literature is that CDD programmes often establish a parallel governance structure that has a tendency to undermine the system already in place.[20] To the extent that these new structures are better equipped to serve their communities in an effective and inclusive manner, this disruption may be justifiable. However, ensuring that the relevant governmental bodies and other development actors have sufficient commitment to these new governance structures is key to overcoming the tendency of different actors to bypass the system and work through local entities of their own creation.[21] Afghanistan has seen examples of these tendencies, but the government has tried to address these by clarifying that the new structures it has created (including CDCs and subcommittees) take precedence over all existing structures. For this approach to be successful, not only does this approach require buy-in from all relevant ministries and other development actors, but these new structures need to be viewed as legitimate by the communities in which they are located. Further, both the governance structures and overall CDD approach need to be harmonized with existing legal framework, ensuring that authorities and responsibilities are distributed in a consistent and effective manner.[22] In Afghanistan, this includes reconciling these structures with those mandated in the constitution, according to which villages and village councils are the foundational units, rather than communities and CDCs.

Citizens' Charter diverges from standard models of CDD on a few points. The first is the review process for community-prioritised subprojects: since the MSS for water access is deemed to be the fundamental service, the priority of rural communities is only taken into account if water supply meets that minimum standard. While this prioritisation reflects the essential role that access to drinking water plays in larger development outcomes, it does constrain the extent to which the Citizens' Charter is actually community-driven.

CCAP has also featured a substantially larger social mobilisation component than most comparable programmes. Driven in part by the failure of previous CDD programmes to produce measurable results in the promotion of state legitimacy and social cohesion, this adaptation is a serious attempt to address the social side of development, but brings with it substantial burdens regarding the time and energy that communities must dedicate to the programme itself. Whether or not this approach is effective will be an important consideration in the design of future CDD programmes, both in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Finally, Citizens' Charter features an innovative approach to the sharing of responsibilities between various actors. The strengths and weaknesses of this system are addressed in greater detail in the following section.

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[20] White, Menon, and Waddington, "Community-Driven Development: Does It Build Social Cohesion or Infrastructure?" iv.

[21] According to Wong and Guggenheim, overcoming this tendency was a key consideration in the design of Citizens' Charter.

[22] Wong and Guggenheim, "Community-Driven Development: Myths and Realities," 8.

B. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Overview

Any discussion of the efficacy of the roles and responsibilities within Citizens' Charter should start with acknowledgement of the two primary models through which the CCNPP has been administered throughout Afghanistan thus far. The rural model, which builds directly upon the framework of rural community development councils (CDCs) established under NSP, is led by a General Directorate situated within the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). The project is divided into two parts, with the social mobilisation (soft) component facilitated by facilitating partner NGOs (FPs) and the infrastructure delivery (hard) component implemented by the government through the MRRD's provincial and district management units (PMUs and DMUs, respectively). In the urban model, which is implemented by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), the FPs have primary responsibility for both the soft and hard components. In both instances, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) serves as the primary coordinating body, and the program serves as the platform through which MAIL, MoE, and MoPH work to attain and sustain certain minimum standards of services to citizens.

At the community level, the primary actors are the CDCs — including their four office bearers: Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary — and subcommittees, as well as social organisers (SO) from the FP and engineers from the PMU / DMU. Communities are further grouped together into clusters (rural) or gozars (urban) and represented by cluster CDCs (CCDCs) and gozar assemblies (GAs) respectively.

In each community, the social organisers are tasked with facilitating a series of exercises that help the community members to take stock of their resources and identify vulnerabilities. The outputs of these exercises then feed into the preparation of a community development plan which identifies the community's priorities, as well as potential sources of funding for each objective. For those priorities which are eligible to be funded as subprojects under CCAP, the PMU engineers must assess the feasibility of the projects and, if approved based on technical feasibility, availability of funds, and alignment with the minimum service standards, develop technical designs for the construction of the infrastructure. Labour for the construction process is provided by the community members themselves, with eligibility for participation designed to prioritise the poorest members of the community (those households categorised as 'poor' and 'very poor' during the wellbeing analysis exercise). The community is also expected to provide cash or in-kind contributions equivalent to a minimum of 10 percent of the total project cost.

a. Community Development Councils

The CDCs themselves take on a variety of responsibilities, including contracting and procurement for subproject implementation, mobilisation of community funds, monitoring of subproject implementation, and participation in cluster elections. As CDC membership is a volunteer role, the intensity of commitment and engagement differed from community to community, with some CDC's focusing primarily on completing the steps necessary to allow the implementation of the CCAP subprojects. Others had taken on a variety of additional tasks and were active in community collective action (for example, prohibiting certain expensive traditional customs), conflict resolution,

and lobbying with government administrations and ministries at the district and provincial levels for more development resources.

> *"We had problem in the village that some families were not letting their daughters go to school, but CDC [members] encouraged them to let their daughters to go to schools and that worked. Now we don't have this problem in our village anymore.*
>
> *"Additionally, families were not allowing their children to be vaccinated, but with the support of CDC, these problems are now solved and families are having their children vaccinated."*
>
> Community Member, Parwan

Likewise, the roles of individual CDC members varied within the communities visited for the study. One of these points had to do with the distribution of responsibilities between CDC office bearers and the other CDC members. In some communities the entire CDC (including both men and women) were reported to be active, while in others the CDC responsibilities were shouldered primarily by the (male) office bearers. The treasurer position was noted by facilitating partners as having its occupants resign from the position with notably higher frequency than the other positions. The explanation provided was that the responsibilities for that particular role went beyond what most community members were willing and/or able to deliver on a volunteer basis.

b. *Subcommittees*

The CDC subcommittees specified in the Operations Manual include both management and sectoral / thematic subcommittees. The management subcommittees are: Project Management, Community Participatory Monitoring / Grievance Handling Mechanisms and Disaster / Risk Mitigation / Management. The thematic subcommittees are: Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Women, Youth, and Vulnerable Groups. The scope of work laid out in the terms of reference for the subcommittees is quite ambitious, and some time will likely be required before all of those functions can be fulfilled (especially for the newly-formed subcommittees which have not been able to build on existing shura structures such as the pre-existing education and health shuras). Regardless, the education and health subcommittees were generally reported to be engaged with the scorecard process for their respective facilities (where those facilities were present). Segments of the MoE would reportedly like to expand the mandate of the education subcommittees to include broader questions of literacy and adult education. The environment and agriculture subcommittees in some of the communities visited were attributed with having helped stop deforestation and provide local farmers with seeds for planting, respectively. The Vulnerability Group Development (VGD) subcommittees were reported to be particularly active because of their responsibility in mobilising and overseeing resources for the grain banks.[23]

> *"The health [sub]committee has evaluated the health clinic. When a new vaccine*

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[23] The VGD subcommittee and associated grain banks are only included in the rural model of CCAP.

*arrives in the area, they let them know about the new vaccination so that people
take their children to be vaccinated. This way whenever there is a problem, or there
is a problem with the health post about the medications, the health committee will
inform them and provide them information."*

CDC Member, Parwan

2. Communication and coordination

a. National level

At the national level, cooperation among the various ministries is coordinated by the MoF.
Representatives from the ministries generally reported contentment with this arrangement
(although IDLG admitted that this was the directorate's first time working with so many partners, so
it took some time during Phase 1 to adapt appropriately), but other respondents did suggest that
there were aspects of cooperation that were inhibited due to intra-governmental political loyalties.

Communication and coordination both among FPs and between the government and FPs were
acknowledged as issues that would benefit from further prioritisation. The competitive selection
process of FPs appears to have stunted some initial opportunities for collaboration and continued to
discourage full transparency about challenges faced and lessons learned, particularly as FPs
anticipated competing against each other for the contracts for the subsequent phases of the
programme. Additionally, greater coordination among FPs might have allowed collective negotiation
to address some of the less favourable elements of their initial contracts. As it was, however, those
FPs who tried to negotiate the terms of their contracts did so individually (or only with their
consortium partners) and the fear of having the contract taken away and given to a different NGO
instead limited their success. This also inhibited the effectiveness of engagement with the
government through the Facilitating Partner Representative Group (FPRG), as the contractual
problems delayed payments to FPs and efforts to fix that situation reportedly came to dominate
these discussions.

Particularly when it came to planning for subsequent phases of the Citizens' Charter, FPs reported
feeling like they were left out of the conversation. A strong desire to be included in a consultative
process for the design of Phase 2 (and any evolution in the role of FPs) was expressed by nearly all
FPs who were consulted for this study. This has since been partially addressed, through a series of
four workshops beginning in January 2020 — two each with / led by the World Bank and MRRD,
respectively — that contributed to the midterm review process, but a desire for further engagement
appeared to remain.

b. Community level

Within the studied communities, the degree of formality of interactions between CDCs and their
subcommittees varied. In some locations the CDC reported holding monthly or bi-weekly meetings
with the subcommittees to coordinate activities. Communications also depended on the extent to
which non-CDC members were willing to be active participants in their subcommittees.

Likewise, CDC engagement with their respective FPs varied in terms of formality and frequency. Some CDC members reported regular structured meetings, even after the conclusion of subproject construction, but others appeared to handle such engagement on a more ad hoc basis. Unsurprisingly, however, for all of them the period of most intensive engagement was during social mobilisation.

Community engagement with district government officials and line ministry representatives was reported to be common across most of the communities studied. CDC office bearers, in particular, tended to advocate for their communities, requesting funding and assistance with various issues with some frequency. Interactions with other levels of government was less common, but not unheard of.

While line ministries and NGOs report engaging with CDCs and subcommittees on some issues, such engagement is still in the midst of becoming institutionalised. In the near term, parallel structures (such as education shuras) still exist, and properly streamlining and integrating these disparate systems will require shared commitment to following a single, coherent approach, presumably prioritising CDCs and subcommittees rather than alternative structures.

On thematic issues, ministries at times seemed more inclined to engage directly with the corresponding subcommittee, particularly when that subcommittee was the direct successor to their previously established shuras. While beyond the scope of this study to verify, some respondents suggested that the national and provincial administrations were more likely to prioritize CDC engagement on security issues rather than other development objectives, reaching out to the community-level actors as an effort to regain ground.

Certain provincial line directorates reportedly ignore CDC members, refusing to recognize their role because they do not have ID badges to document their positions. This problem is perhaps more reflective of issues with the recognition of CDCs and the need to establish protocols for handling communication, rather than a genuine need for ID badges. A similar situation was reported both by subcommittee members and FPs regarding the first round of scorecards, during which school administrators refused to let subcommittee members visit their schools to conduct the scorecards. In the case of the scorecards, this issue appears to have been resolved in subsequent iterations of the assignment.

3. Successes

Among CCAP's successes (more of which will be addressed in the section on Project Activities, below) should be counted the development of new capacities at the provincial, district, cluster/gozar, and community levels. For PMUs to have taken over the role of implementing the rural engineering side of the project (which, under NSP, had been facilitated by the partner NGOs) represents an important step toward the internalization of essential service delivery functions by the government system. This process remains incomplete, however, as the PMUs consist of contracted staff, and the integration of their operations with those of the permanent civil servants is a process that will need to continue for some time to come (particularly at the policy level).

Further successes at the community level can be seen in CCAP's contribution to the further institutionalization of CDCs and the establishment of operational subcommittees. Both line ministries and NGOs report working through these institutions in their development efforts, and their prominence suggests strong potential for further collaboration between ministries, NGOs, and these community institutions in the future.

Finally, the preliminary reports regarding CCDCs and GAs appear to be quite positive. Community members asserted that these mechanisms make engagement with government ministries more effective, since ministry officials were better positioned to respond to collective requests that to those of individual communities. In the medium term this will hopefully serve to streamline the overall governance environment administratively.

4. Challenges

While the transfer of key responsibilities to MRRD's PMUs can be viewed as an important, if limited, step in the development of institutional capacity for the government, it was also a source of numerous challenges throughout the course of project implementation (in rural locations). By taking the delivery of infrastructure out of the hands of FPs, three interrelated challenges arose:

1. There became a disconnect between the social mobilisation and infrastructure delivery components of the project. While the FPs' social organisers would help facilitate the community development planning process, final decisions about whether to build the selected projects were made by PMU engineers. These decisions were based on factors that were not fully understood by communities and, at times, led to disappointment or frustration that FPs felt was directed toward them, damaging the standing and trust that the NGOs had worked to build in these communities.

2. This disconnect (along with challenges in successfully managing the documentation requirements) also led to delays in project progress during the handover process. While not seen quite this sharply in the communities visited for this study, FPs reported that, in some instances, project momentum was lost, the link between social mobilisation and infrastructure delivery made more tenuous, and community willingness to sustain CDCs and subcommittees began to wane.

3. By linking FP payments to PMU activities outside of the NGO's control — which were subsequently delayed for a variety of reasons — additional resource pressures were placed on the FPs, making it more difficult for many of the smaller organisations to sustain their operations.

As part of an effort to promote accountability regarding the proper implementation of the project and proper utilization of funds, the reporting requirements for the various actors involved with CCAP at the community level throughout the project cycle are extensive. Unfortunately, these requirements frequently tax the limits of literacy in many rural communities. Representatives from the World Bank clarified that efforts to streamline these requirements were being considered during the midterm review, potentially leading to adaptations that address this issue in the near future.

More generally, the current contractual system for FPs has a few issues to be resolved. First, it creates perverse incentives that risk undermining proper facilitation and reporting. This approach

did little to address the different conditions faced during social mobilisation in a range of community environments and put the emphasis on racing to deliver certain outputs rather than taking time for a thorough, contextualised process. When faced with challenging circumstances, FP representatives tended to adapt on the fly, without necessarily reporting the deviations from the specifics laid out in the Operations Manual. This system also makes it financially challenging to admit that certain thresholds (regarding turnout for elections or participation rates for social mobilisation exercises, for example) were not met, since that would require repeating the process without any additional funds, while inflating the figures was perceived as a way to allow the project to continue with less risk to the actors involved. Finally, certain activities (e.g. scorecards) remained dependent on the progress of PMU staff, thus locking the disbursement of funds to FPs to activities outside of their control. This placed a particularly heavy burden on the smaller, typically national NGOs who faced serious cash flow issues related to the payment delays.

In smaller communities, the staffing demands of the various subcommittees can be a heavy burden. The number of subcommittees is such that families may need to have multiple family members involved in the various subcommittees just to reach the minimum threshold for functionality. Likewise, the existence of education or health subcommittees in communities that do not have education or health facilities led community members to expect those services and resent the subcommittees if they could not provide them with facilities.

The relative merits of CDC-linked subcommittees compared to the previous (and, in some instances, continued) structure of facility-linked shuras appeared to be open for debate. For education, as an example, the continued role of school shuras as parents' committees, with the focus of subcommittees on technical issues risks potential duplication. The importance of linking these efforts to a larger approach associated with facility catchment areas was acknowledged during interviews with government officials in Kabul, so the possibility of further rationalising this approach seems feasible (perhaps by using the relevant subcommittee members as representatives from their communities in a larger facility-based entity).

C. Project Activities

1. Guiding documents

The implementation of CCAP is guided by a series of manuals covering the operational, social, and training aspects of the program. These manuals lay out the procedures that should be followed in the implementation of CCAP and are a resource for government officials, FP representatives, and others. The evolution of these manuals was viewed with mixed opinions: while some FPs wanted more regular revision of the manuals, there were also concerns about the revisions that had been made thus far, since they changed the standards for facilitation without providing additional resources for FPs to adapt to the new expectations. In practical terms, revisions that relax standards for facilitation (or any other component of implementation) could be relatively easily incorporated during the middle of the phase, but other adaptations would likely require additional resources for full, effective uptake.

Recognising that local context has a significant impact on the program and that security-related

challenges may constrain the implementation of certain procedures as laid out in the Operations Manual, a High Risk Areas Implementation Strategy (HRAIS) was developed to provide alternative implementation modalities in insecure locations where following the standard operating procedures was deemed to not be feasible. The HRAIS lowers requirements for attendance of certain social mobilisation exercises and allows for the use of more local staff during the technical components of the project in hopes that this would mitigate risks associated with large gatherings and the transportation of staff from outside of the communities. Unfortunately, the HRAIS had neither been widely disseminated nor utilized at the time of data collection (despite having been approved for approximately one year), so any assessment regarding the effectiveness of its provisions would be premature.

Despite the programme's extensive documentation, respondents' understandings of the goals of the Citizens' Charter varied significantly. For a programme as large and complex as CCAP, it is unsurprising that different individuals prioritised different components of the project, but these differences can actually undermine project success. For example, if someone views the programme as primarily about infrastructure delivery in an effort to ensure that all Afghan citizens have access to certain minimum service standards, then the social mobilisation exercises — especially their emphasis on women's involvement — are peripheral and compromises can be readily made in order to allow for the infrastructure to be constructed. On the other hand, if the primary objective of the project is viewed in terms of governance and government legitimacy, then the institution-building side of social mobilisation takes a higher priority, and decisions not to implement in opposition-controlled areas are readily justified. There are compelling narratives to be told regarding how women's participation is fundamental to poverty alleviation or proper representation during the CDC elections can contribute to better outcomes in infrastructure delivery, but currently those perspectives are not widely understood. Building a more unified vision, especially on what the soft component will contribute to achieving over the medium to long term, would help to justify some of the current activities and encourage careful and thorough implementation / facilitation.

Table 2: Narratives and implications

Narrative (Variants)	Outcomes to be Monitored	Implications
Governance (State-Building; State Legitimacy; Counterinsurgency)	▪ Functioning institutions ▪ Integration of institution with larger sub-national governance system	▪ Focus on transparent, corruption-free processes ▪ Respecting social mobilisation standards is key ▪ Timeline and incentive structure / conditionality should encourage compliance with standards ▪ CDCs, subcommittees, CCDCs / GAs are key outputs ▪ Focus on the approach to CCDCs / GAs (organic or designed to deliberately undermine the authority of existing, less representative structures) ▪ Emphasise sustaining the new structures legally, institutionally, and financially beyond the duration of CCAP ▪ Focus on mitigating risks linked to Taliban (rejection, co-option)
Service Delivery (Infrastructure)	▪ Quality and sustainability of infrastructure ▪ Equal access to infrastructure	▪ Subprojects are driven by the MSS ▪ Guidelines for social mobilization inform a process, but do not need to be strictly followed / can be adapted to context ▪ CDCs and complementary structures are a means to an end, with limited efforts toward sustainability

Narrative (Variants)	Outcomes to be Monitored	Implications
		▪ Aim to provide services to all citizens, regardless of whether they live in government-controlled territory or pay taxes ▪ Need to tie into larger-scale programmes (so local roads connect to highways, etc.)
Social Fabric (Social Change; Social Cohesion)	▪ Reduction of conflicts / resilience to tensions ▪ Solidarity mechanisms reinforced ▪ Inclusiveness / social empowerment of marginalized groups	▪ Social mobilisation process *is* the key output ▪ Subprojects serve as a mechanism for encouraging community cooperation and promoting a greater role for women and other marginalised groups ▪ Focus on 'Do No Harm' principles / approach during mobilization ▪ CDC membership is a key mechanism for promoting social change or continuity (depending on whether existing structures are incorporated or replaced / excluded) ▪ Focus on developing tailored approaches to promote social change in highly conservative areas ▪ Substantive engagement for women is essential
Poverty Reduction (Short-term relief; Medium / Long-term development)	▪ Sub-projects' relevance for savings in time, improvements in agricultural yield, better access to markets, etc. ▪ Alignment with national economic development priorities	▪ Outcome focused (process is purely instrumental) ▪ Volunteer commitments (including CDC and subcommittee membership) should be substantially reduced ▪ Payment for physical labour is a key benefit – ensuring that women-headed households benefit is important ▪ Ultimately need alternative livelihoods in rural areas; subproject menus could be expanded to address this

2. Social mobilisation

The implementation of CCAP in each community begins with a series of activities designed to ensure community engagement and participation in this community-driven development programme. This procedure involves a series of mapping exercises to take stock of socio-economic conditions of the community and the public resources available to it, as well as exercises designed to identify vulnerabilities and guide the preparation of the community development plan. The way in which these exercises were conducted varied from community to community, influenced by the initial community response to the programme, the security situation, and the skills and training of the social organisers, as well as their commitment to check the wellbeing analysis by conducting a door-to-door verification (as well as their understanding that the process was to be participatory, rather than commencing with the door-to-door mapping). There were reports of wealthier individuals trying to be categorised as poor or very poor to attain the benefits those groups were to receive. Most instances where this was reported were used to highlight how it had been prevented, but the risk remains that people will seek to take advantage of the system, and thus intentionality with regards to participatory mechanisms — to ensure that a large portion of the community is actively involved, in line with the requirements laid out in the Operations Manual — and secondary checks will be important to mitigate this in the future.

Another issue that was identified was that specific requirements of the mapping process tended produce quite standardized maps, and that the nuance of difference between communities was sometimes lost in the process of finalising the maps, particularly when men and women made their maps separately and those needed to be reconciled for the final product. Expected quotas and thresholds for the wellbeing analysis also presented some challenges when all or nearly community members were living in severe poverty.

Precise election modalities varied among the communities visited, whether due to the specific cultural and security context in the communities or simply differing understandings among the social organisers. One point that most of the elections shared, however, was the fact that candidates had been pre-identified, allowing for a degree of campaigning in certain instances. In one community the pre-identified candidates each had their own box to accumulate votes, allowing for community members to vote without needing to write the names of their preferred candidate, but potentially undermining the secrecy of the vote and severely constraining opportunities to vote for alternative candidates. In general, however, respondents reported that they were able to vote for the candidate they favoured, suggesting that the freedom of choice intended to be obtained through the secret ballot had been sustained.

Reports suggest that election units were used (although some had both male and female representatives from each unit, while others said that the gender of the unit was pre-determined, with some portions of the community electing women and other electing men). If done properly, this should help to ensure that the election process is more representative of the community, and some community members reported that this was in fact the case.

3. Community development planning

The community development planning process is the culmination of the social mobilisation stage of CCAP. During this activity, community members list all of their collective priorities in terms of development needs in the short and medium terms, and identify which needs they can address on their own, which might be funded through CCAP, and which will require other external assistance (for example, through support from the UN or NGOs).

The menu of subprojects which can be funded through CCAP are designed to help communities attain their MSS. Just as the MSS vary between the urban and rural models of CCAP, so too do the menus of potential subprojects. Additionally, there is the opportunity for communities to pool resources to produce a joint subproject if their priorities align, while gozar assemblies have a separate funding mechanism that can be used to address priorities at the gozar level.

The menu of subprojects that were eligible to receive funding through CCAP were generally well-received, but schools and clinics — which were supposed to be funded through separate programmes — often ranked quite highly during the community development planning process (in both urban and rural locations). There were repeated requests for supplementary projects designed specifically for women (as existed under NSP and in the urban model of CCAP), with recommended projects ranging from courses on tailoring or midwifery to the construction of childcare centres which might, for example, facilitate the work of female teachers or nurses with children. It was

explained that women in many communities lacked the interest, skills, and exposure necessary for full engagement with CCAP, and that introducing women's grants would provide an avenue for more direct engagement. Through full responsibility for the project, the women would develop the skills and experience necessary for further participation in community development, allowing them to participate more fully both in the remainder of CCAP and in subsequent programmes. The potential risk, however, is that by creating a small supplementary project specifically for women, it might, given the prevailing social norms, be perceived that the rest of the Citizens' Charter was explicitly the domain of men, thereby undermining the full engagement of women. The concerns linked to this point typically arose when the women's projects were framed specific percentage of the total project (e.g. 10 percent), and better framing of the narrative surrounding those projects could serve to mitigate what risk there might be.

In general, there appears to have been a lack of clarity regarding how the community development planning process feeds into the projects that are actually constructed. Perhaps due to comparisons with the NSP, community members regularly expected that their community was entitled to a certain amount of money and were frustrated both by the lack of information about how much money that was, as well as instances in which projects that communities had ranked first on their CDPs for CCAP funding was bypassed in favour of lower priorities. The lack of specific details regarding the size of the block grant the community was entitled to receive was also viewed by some community members as a sign of corruption, since they assumed the absence of a clear figure meant that money was being syphoned off. Addressing this issue will likely require more careful communication by the FPs and their social organisers during social mobilisation and the community development planning process.

In urban settings it was found that the funds available to CDCs were not always sufficient to allow the project benefits to cover the whole community. To address this issue, communities have apparently received permission to use the gozar fund to supplement the community block grant and allow for the complete coverage of the prioritised service.

FPs mentioned that they would like the final CDP document to include more information justifying why particular projects were prioritised. This could then feed into the PMU assessment and be addressed as appropriate in instances when the prioritized project is not selected for funding.

The linkage between the CDPs and larger strategic and development planning and budgeting processes at the district and provincial level remains weak. As the programme continues to mature, working to build a more integrated vision for development could be beneficial.

4. Infrastructure delivery

The projects that are prioritised in the CDP must be assessed by the PMU engineers, who verify its feasibility and relevance for attaining certain MSS. In rural communities this also means that universal access to drinking water will take precedence over any other priorities. The chance that the community's first choice project will not be deemed feasible had not always been communicated adequately to the community members, leading to frustrations when they received a lower priority project.

There were reports that powerful community members would try to bring the subprojects close to their properties to maximise access to water or road (or to irrigate their own fields). While these examples were generally provided along with examples of successful mitigation, it is an issue that deserves additional attention in the future.

Financial management and procurement for subproject implementation is supposed to be led by the CDC and its project management subcommittee, following a series of trainings on project management, procurement, and accounting, led by the FPs. Labour for the construction of the infrastructure was provided by community members in return for a daily wage. Priority was given to members of poor and very poor households to ensure that they would have a chance to benefit from the available wages. To the extent that the wellbeing analysis was conducted appropriately, this appears to have been successful in targeting those households.

5. Scorecards

Scorecards gauge both performance and resources. In communities facing issues with absenteeism in their health facilities or schools, FPs report that scorecards have helped with accountability. In these instances, however, individuals who stand to lose from accurate reporting (for example, the principals or teachers) have been known to try to undermine the process.

For frontline workers who are trying their best to serve their communities but who lack resources to help them do their jobs, the visits from social organisers or subcommittee members to take stock of the situation at their clinic or school were reportedly well-received. There was apparently the perception that requests for funding or other resources channelled through the scorecards were more likely to be addressed than those send through internal channels. This is a favourable sign for the functionality of the scorecards, but raises potential concerns about the pre-existing mechanisms for reporting needs at the facilities.

One issue FPs reported was that some of the clinics they visited did not have code numbers, preventing the data from the scorecards from being appropriately recorded in the system. In general, however, the subcommittees in the visited communities seem to have been able to manage scorecard implementation, with FPs more involved in providing support for the first round and then largely passing responsibility over to the subcommittees. This successful development suggests that the completion of scorecards is an activity that could be sustained even once FPs cease their work in a given community.

6. Key considerations

a. Participation and engagement

> *"I think 90 percent of women participated in the election. There were no main constraints preventing their participation."*
>
> Female Community Member, Balkh

"At the beginning, women in our village — myself included — weren't interested in taking part in CCAP activities, but later on we changed our minds. Right now, all women are included in these activities. This was made possible by the female social worker who did a lot to get us included."

Female CDC Member, Parwan

"The problem is that people are busy doing their jobs. When we tell the people to come to choose the head and deputy, they were saying 'They are not giving us any money for participation in the elections.' … Because of that the presence of the people was not that great."

Male Community Member, Balkh

"Well, around 50 percent of the people participated in the elections; however, we had announced in the village 3 days before the elections and let the people know about the procedure, and we told them about the project and the goal of the election which was to select the key members of the CDC who would take the responsibility of the project implementation.

"Then on the election day, lots of people stood as nominees, and other people voted, the process was inclusive and transparent, and everything went smoothly without any problem.

"And all the 50 percent who participated in the elections were men, and the women were not involved in the process."

Male CDC Member, Zabul

"30 percent of the community women participated in the election. They were not well informed… The people who knew about it were not interested in participating in the meeting… In the Citizens' Charter programme primary meetings, there were a lot of people, but when they realized there were not any salaries they stopped participating. They used to think they should go after their work to earn some money for their family."

Male Community Member, Balkh

"The youth of today are not very interested in the program. They are hopeless. Whenever I sit with the youth, I tell them that the Citizens' Charter programme is a good programme."

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Male Community Member, Balkh

"So far, we are 5 members in this council, head of the council, deputy, treasurer, and two other members; we meet with the implementors because nobody else is involved. We only contact them, and they share their problems with us.

"The villagers don't listen to us, and the CCAP members should come to talk to them.

"The community is not involved at all. If the CCAP members would practically visit these areas and involve the villagers, then it would be an inclusive project. But now, 5 members from the council and 5 others from the project side like engineers and surveyors are involved in the process."

CDC Member, Zabul

As the quotes above demonstrate, the reported levels of participation and engagement varied significantly between communities. While the data collected for this study were purely qualitative and gathered more than a year after most CDC elections (thus limiting the capacity to truly triangulate on numbers for participation), community perceptions seem to validate concerns that the reported election turnout percentages have at times been inflated in reports from FPs — particularly with regard to women's participation. While 60 percent participation of both men and women is formally required for the continuation of the Citizens' Charter process, it was not uncommon for respondents to estimate that 30 percent of women in their community (or fewer) had participated in the elections.

When asked why community members did not participate in the election or social mobilisation exercises, the most common reason for not participating (especially in elections) was poverty, since poor community members could not afford to give up the day of work. While elections were supposed to be held on Fridays, some respondents reported that elections in their community were held of Saturday or Sunday, which would explain lower participation rates in some communities. Beyond poverty, a lack of interest in the project (especially in communities that had not participated in NSP) was noted as deterring participation during the early stages of the project in some locations, driven by a lack of awareness regarding the relevance and importance of CCAP in their lives. Finally, it was suggested by one FP that a larger distrust of development sector institutions may have contributed to lower participation in some communities.

b. Inclusion

Across the communities studied for this report, the pro-poor emphasis of CCAP was readily apparent. Respondents recognized that reducing poverty was a key objective of CCAP, and key components of both social mobilisation and infrastructure delivery were reported to serve this objective. The wellbeing analysis and seasonal calendar exercises were reportedly effective in identifying the households most in need of support in the various communities. This then translated into priority for wage labour during the construction of project infrastructure, as well as benefits linked to the grain banks as the newly established mechanism helped to channel donations to those

in need. The most significant barrier to the participation of poor community members was generally perceived to be their inability to sacrifice time away from work for the volunteer activities during social mobilisation or the continued CDC and subcommittee processes. This barrier was less relevant for the poorest community members, since many of them lacked any form of employment which might interfere with their ability to participate.

The inclusion of women throughout program activities was less consistently successful. While some of the studied locations appeared to have substantial success in involving women as equal participants in social mobilisation and planning processes, as discussed in the Challenges section below, both cultural practices and insecurity tended to inhibit the full participation of women in certain locations (particularly in Zabul). Among the challenges to women's participation were purely logistical issues: while men were able to conduct their social mobilisation exercises in the community mosque or other communal gathering area, there were fewer equivalent locations for women. Thus, in the communities visited for data collection, it was not uncommon to hear that what women's participation there was (whether in the elections or other components of CCAP) tended to take place in private houses. In some communities, it was similarly explained that women had little reason to participate unless there were going to be women-specific projects (as implemented in NSP and the urban model of CCAP). Additionally, it was generally difficult for women to participate fully in the wage labour associated with the construction of the infrastructure projects.

According to CCAP guidelines, the positions of the CDC board should be distributed evenly between male and female CDC members: in communities where the Chair is male, the Deputy should be female, while the Treasurer and Secretary should be male and female respectively. When the Chair is female, a male CDC member would then hold the Deputy position. In practice, ATR received reports both of female office bearers who held the positions only on paper (with the positions either left empty or filled by male community members, apparently a relatively common practice in the most conservative provinces) and communities where a woman had received the most votes for the chair position, but where the position was given to a man instead, with the woman filling the deputy role. In the specific case that ATR investigated in Balkh, the justifications were largely cultural and logistical, focusing on the responsibilities that the position of chair entailed and stating that women did not have the time to be involved with all aspects of project implementation — statements which likely had more to do with cultural norms than the actual capacity of women to balance their Citizens' Charter responsibilities with their other duties.

Certain rigid conditions for inclusion in CCAP also had the effect of excluding some of the most remote communities in the country. For example, currently there does not appear to be any flexibility for the inclusion of remote communities that do not meet the 25-household minimum for participation. While many small communities have been able to join with other neighbouring communities for inclusion, FPs reported that particularly remote villages in Wakhan, for example, were not able to do so and thus were not able to benefit from the Citizens' Charter.

c. *Transparency and accountability*

> *"There are many obstacles that inhibited women's participation in the election. I told you before that our society is traditional, women are not allowed to participate in*

> *elections. It is considered as a shame. On the other hand, there were not any proper*
> *elections held so that women could take part. Still, the women who are elected, if*
> *any, are not talented and cannot serve. They are picked out of nepotism and*
> *favouritism."*
>
> Female Community Member, Zabul

In most of the studied communities, the main complaints about transparency and accountability related to a lack of clarity about Citizens' Charter processes. Key decisions which, by design, were to be made by PMU engineers, for example, were perceived by community members as issues that potentially undermined accountability.

There were also perceived issues with FP reporting, driven in part by an incentive structure that did not favour precise, accurate reporting on issues of participation and the proper facilitation. This was not fixed by the heavy documentation requirements, which could just as easily mask improper reporting.

Likewise, reservations were expressed about the current structure for monitoring in the rural model of CCAP, since the provincial monitoring teams report to the head of the PMU, rather than operating as an autonomous unit and the capacity to report directly back to the central monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team in Kabul. This was perceived by some respondents as inhibiting the ability of the provincial team to report honestly about PMU performance.

> *"[If someone] has a complaint, we teach them through seminars how they can*
> *complain. If they have complaints, there is a complaints box and there is a poster*
> *installed above the complaints box with a contact number so they can call to*
> *complain. Otherwise, they can write their complaints and drop them in the*
> *complaints box or send an email to the email address… They can use the easiest*
> *method to send their complaints."*
>
> Social Organiser, Parwan

Complaints mechanisms vary, but often seemed to lack a mechanism to bypass the CDC in instances where the complaint relates to them (or at least community members were unaware of such measures). In such instances, it would be helpful to create systems for reporting directly to the district or provincial authorities. Assessing the positive and negative aspects of such a system, and instituting safeguards to make sure that it would not be abused, would be important for the operationalisation of such a measure.

d. *Learning and action-orientation*

Both internal and external / third-party M&E have critical roles to play in learning from implementation to date and improving performance moving forward. While it was explained by government officials that the monitoring forms have traditionally been paper-based, transitioning to

electronic data collection could allow for the use of built-in alarms that identify major issues immediately and allow for concerns to be addressed much more rapidly. Likewise, government respondents expressed the desire to see the third-party monitoring findings disseminated more widely to allow the relevant actors to learn from mistakes and take corrective action as necessary.

The World Bank's Midterm Review was a good example of making efforts to learn and adapt at an institutional level. At the community level, however, one of the key mechanisms for such learning, exposure visits, have become increasingly difficult to implement in the current security environment. Working to develop alternative mechanisms to promote learning and action-orientation would be beneficial in future stages of the programme.

7. Successes

Perhaps the most significant success of the CCAP to date is the positive reception it has experienced in the target communities. On the whole, respondents were appreciative of the programme and open to the work it was doing (particularly the infrastructure components). In certain communities, there were also reports of preliminary social changes, including the increased role of women in community decision-making processes.

Coordination between line ministries on service delivery can also be viewed as one of the successes of the program. There remains room for improvement, but a positive example thus far can be seen in the construction of rural school buildings through the EQRA project (MRRD & MoE).

Reports regarding scorecards were also generally positive. While the approach to using the scorecards varied across target locations, some respondents noted that schools and clinics in their vicinity welcomed the use of scorecards because they helped the site to better lobby their respective ministry for support to address deficiencies. This also appears to be an activity that will be able to be sustained by communities even once the FPs cease their work in those communities.

The grain bank can be viewed as a success in terms of social cohesion and community collective action. Working hand-in-hand with the social mapping, wellbeing analysis, and seasonal calendar — which helped community members to become more aware of vulnerable groups within their communities — the grain bank provided a natural avenue through which to channel resources to those in need. Likewise, the leaking pot exercise was also widely hailed as a beneficial, since it encouraged communities to eliminate expensive traditions that were pushing people to poverty (such as expensive wedding customs).

8. Challenges

a. Managing expectations

There was a lack of clarity among respondents about the way in which the community development planning process feeds into the decisions regarding funding, as well as the role of MSS and other questions of feasibility play in determining project financing. Thus, decisions by the PMU engineers to substitute one project for another were viewed as disregard for the preferences of community members.

Additionally, whether due to miscommunication by the social organisers or the simply wishful thinking on the part of community members, several respondents reported that they expected the remaining priorities on their CDPs to be funded during the second and third phases of Citizens' Charter. Clarifying that the phases refer to stages of the geographic roll out of CCNPP, rather than subsequent rounds of funding for each community would help to avoid disappointments in the future.

b. Cultural considerations

"At first some [women] were not allowed to participate but when their men saw that men were also casting their votes then they allowed their women to participate as well."

Community Member, Balkh

"This community is very backward and traditional; even I, as an educated person, won't let my female family members come out of the house, and they don't wish to. We know that women should also be involved in CCAP projects, but they are limited to their houses in these districts… I can assure you that if any women come to the committee, nobody is ready to accept her as a member and they will leave her alone.

"I don't think women have any part in the committees in our province, and you won't be able to find 5 female members in 200 committees…

"There is only one way for women to get involved in the projects, and that is if the committees are all women and the engineers and monitors are all females, then it might be possible that women get involved."

Government Official, Zabul

"The people of this village are not educated. They don't know about the value of these programs. I don't think that they have selected any woman in the election…. Women didn't participate in the election…. Women didn't participate in the programs. People don't let women to participate in such programs."

Community Member, Zabul

"There are no women in the process at all. You can't find any women in our village who are involved in any activity…

"I will make it short for you: there is no need for women to go out of the house; they are not allowed out at all. They have to stay at home, and that is the purpose of their life."

Experiences and Expectations in Community-Driven Development
Monitoring Research of Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project

CDC Member, Zabul

Perhaps even more than insecurity, cultural norms continue to constrain the role of women in CCAP. In the most severe cases, this can include the falsification of data related to the participation of women in elections or the CDCs: female office bearers at times only hold their positions on paper, with the positions being left empty or filled by some male community member in their stead. Even when such blatant violations are avoided, however, other more subtle barriers may prevent women from reaping the full benefits of CCAP. For one, the lack of women's education in many communities often contributes to a sense that women have less to contribute to the program and has been reported to lead to a lack of interest in or engagement with the subprojects. Similarly, cultural restrictions on the ability of women to participate in physical labour inhibit their ability to benefit fully from the wages of the day labourers who help to construct the infrastructure that is built through the CCAP. This naturally leads to the question of how the program can best engage women practically in the projects, to ensure that they are active participants throughout the entire Citizens' Charter process.

It should be noted that there was a widespread understanding of the 'proper' responses related to standards for social mobilisation. Respondents in positions of authority and active engagement with the Citizens' Charter knew to claim 60 percent turnout for elections and equal participation for men and women. This perfect recitation of the standards for the election seemed, in some instances, to be more reflective of proper awareness of the Operations Manual rather than necessarily reflecting the conditions of the election, and may be related to a larger incentive to hide deviations so that the project can continue without interruption.

c. Corruption

> *"Due to the irresponsibility of the CCAP, each well has been dug 4 times. They just remove the concrete and renew it and ask the budget for digging a new well. I am sure that the CCAP administration is aware of it, but don't know why don't they take any action."*

Government Official, Zabul

As with any development programme, the resources provided through CCAP have the potential to feed into local power politics and provide a new avenue for rent-seeking and corruption. Different infrastructure subprojects have different risks for corruption. Existing wells, as noted in the quote above, may be retrofitted and made to appear new, allowing individuals to pocket the money that should have been spent on actually installing a new well. In the example quoted above, the respondent explained that wells had not even been prioritized in these communities, but that the PMU engineers made the decision to designate the community for well construction rather than the roads (or even other infrastructure) that were actually on their list. This took advantage of the MSS and technical feasibility review process and was perceived to be particularly damaging to community trust in the Citizens' Charter and the government.

This example highlights an institutional vulnerability to corruption. It could be argued that, since

CCAP has mechanisms in place to prevent PMUs from accessing the bank accounts of communities directly, the blame here lies with the communities, who utilised the funds and supplied the labour.[24] However, if the project truly were fraudulent, the PMU should never have approved it during the review process, and it retained the ability to prevent the community from withdrawing money to finance it. Whether led by the community or the PMU, however, without proper oversight and effective complaints mechanisms, it would only require a few key actors to carry out this scheme.

The gender quotas for CDC office bearers (which require that two positions be filled by women and two by men) eliminates a potential check against corruption in communities where the women's authority is limited. It was noted during informal conversations with ATR's field researchers that the mixed-gender set-up makes it easier for the CDC Chair and Treasurer to reach an agreement to divert money or otherwise subvert the implementation of the CCAP. Since the voices of the Deputy and Secretary carry little weight in some communities, the decision to pursue corruption requires only the agreement of two individuals, rather than four.

An additional risk associated with corruption comes from the damage that it can do to community perceptions of the Government of Afghanistan and international partners. When the corruption is practiced by government officials, it can be seen as a direct abrogation of the trust that CCAP is intended to build. Whoever is involved, however, some respondents expressed their expectation that CCAP — which, in numerous interviews, was perceived to be an entity in its own right — knows about this corruption and is wilfully choosing to ignore it.

d. Security

The security environment in Afghanistan has evolved significantly since the originally planning for CCAP. The situation in which the implementing agencies find themselves today is generally more volatile and challenging than it was when the plans and contracting details were being finalised in 2016. Consequently, some of the components of the project that should have been feasible to complete within the allotted time have posed difficulties that have slowed down the rollout to date.

> *"I was personally getting calls from the Taliban. The head of my CDC was getting calls from the Taliban. They thought that we were rich people and have high incomes that we have gotten [from the Citizens' Charter]."*
>
> Female CDC Member, Balkh

Issues with security ranged from general criminality and financially-motivated threats, to systematic attempts to counter certain components of the programme. The Taliban reportedly have four primary objections to the current Citizens' Charter process:

1. Election through secret ballot;
2. Large gatherings (which are perceived to be a threat);

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[24] In conversations with MRRD it was explained that this was precisely the track they had taken when faced with similar situations in other provinces. The communities were ultimately expected to reimburse the fraudulent project in its entirety before being allowed to continue with the programme.

3. Women's participation (including the involvement of female social organisers);
4. Any effort to bring communities closer to the government.

> *"No, the women did not participate in the election process. Before the elections we advised each other that if women participate in the elections, the Taliban may prevent our council and its works and services. Therefore, we have done the elections without the participation of women."*
>
> Male Community Member, Zabul

While the HRAIS takes some important steps to address these challenges and adapt project implementation to the context in which it is being conducted, there remain further issues to be addressed — either through revisions to the strategy or to the Operations Manual itself. Questions remain as to whether lowering percentages for participation (particularly for women) will fundamentally change the perspective of the Taliban or other actors. In effect, if they will accept 20 percent women's participation, why not 60 percent?

More significantly, the HRAIS itself has not been widely implemented even disseminated to date, and even in February 2020, there were FPs who believed that the strategy had not yet been formally approved. While the government is not obligated to utilize the HRAIS standards even when the conditions are met, the FPs who have submitted requests to have the HRAIS applied to their facilitation reported that their requests were denied for political reasons (especially the reluctance to admit that the government is not in control of certain territory). Delays in verifying the eligibility of certain communities for the HRAIS has meant that FPs and PMUs are often still obliged to try to follow the Operations Manual in locations where that might not be feasible. Not only does this potentially increase the exposure to risk for FP and PMU staff and the communities themselves, but this can lead to delays in project implementation.

e. Taliban taxation

> *"On the other hand, the Taliban asks for 10 percent as tax, and everyone is informed about it. If the tax is a day late, people even pay them from their own pocket, and if it delayed for 2 days, the project gets stopped by the Taliban. Then it will take a month to find the Taliban's governor to start back the project.*
>
> *"[The Taliban] give an official receipt upon payment of the tax, and the shame is that they accept only Pakistani rupees."*
>
> Government Official, Zabul

> *"I went up to a village and asked them how is your interaction with the Taliban regarding a given project? They said: we have to give them 1 AFN out of 10 meaning that 10 percent of the total fund should be diverted to their pocket. Taliban asked the same from us. We went up to them and had a 3 hour-long meeting with them at*

the end of which we could convince them not to double charge us. If we, as FPs, pay
10 percent in tax and the government does the same for one given project, then this
is 'double charge'."

Facilitating Partner Representative

The extraction of money, or 'tax', from development projects by the Taliban is a complicated issue, the full treatment of which goes far beyond the scope of this report. Given the size of the Citizens' Charter, however, and the increasing pressure that programme actors are likely to experience in Phases 2 and 3 of its rollout, a discussion of the trends observed thus far would seem to be in order.

Accusations that others are paying the tax abound, as do earnest testimonies of managing to convince the Taliban to allow an exception for a particular entity or community following a lengthy conversation. In recent years, it appears that the practice has become increasingly formal, with a regular rate (10 percent) demanded, and reports of regular receipts being issued in the name of the Islamic Emirate to verify compliance.

One trend reported during this study was that, when the FPs and/or PMUs are successful in avoiding payment of the tax in Taliban-controlled territories, the burden is reportedly passed to the communities where they are working, who are expected to compensate for the failure of the larger institutions to pay. If this phenomenon is verified in subsequent research, a larger conversation about safeguarding and the principle of 'Do No Harm' is likely merited.

Additionally, the imposition of a 'road tax' on travel between communities has meant that tax can be extracted (albeit, to a lesser degree), even when the programme is being implemented in communities where Taliban influence is minimal if the roads from the district or provincial centre to those communities are insecure.

D. Impact

The scope of this assignment was not intended as a comprehensive impact evaluation. As such, findings related to the impact of the project should be treated with caution, recognising that these are snapshots of certain trends rather than definitive assessments of the outcomes of the programme.

CCAP has a three-pronged focus, aiming to provide the governance platforms and small-scale infrastructure necessary to attain minimum standards of service delivery, promote state legitimacy, and strengthen social cohesion, all under the overarching umbrella of poverty reduction. While a true assessment of the economic impact of CCAP or its impact on poverty is beyond the scope of this study (that would require a longer-term, longitudinal study), preliminary trends for the questions of legitimacy and social change have been identified below.[25]

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[25] A far more complete discussion of state legitimacy and social cohesion can be found in ATR's Conflict and Fragility study.

1. Legitimacy

Given the qualitative nature of data collection and relatively short timeframe of the project, rigorously measuring changes in the perceptions of legitimacy of the government or any other actor was beyond the scope of the study. Regardless, there were some key trends observed in the interviews and group discussions that identify key trends for further observation.

> *"People became so pleased and welcomed the program when they realized that they were heard by the government. They believed that the government was paying attention to them and that the powerful are not the only ones to benefit from all projects. They knew that there was someone in the government who was paying attention to them, especially the Citizens' Charter programme."*
>
> Female CDC Member, Balkh

Perhaps the most significant point is that individual perceptions of the government seemed to be strongly influenced by the level of attention they thought they were receiving from the state. At least in the short term — especially in locations that have felt neglected — the state stands to gain simply by 'showing up' and demonstrating its interest in the wellbeing of its citizens. While CCAP satisfies those conditions to a degree, community members expressed the desire to see more direct outreach from government officials. One of their requests was that government officials actually visit their communities, to see what lives were like in those communities and bridge the perceived distance between ordinary people and government officials. Whether and how this near-term benefit in public opinion translates into true substantive state legitimacy will remain to be seen.

Anecdotes shared by some respondents in the studied provinces (particularly those who felt obliged to encourage popular support for the state) included examples of times where the specific subprojects delivered through CCAP had provided them with tangible examples of what the government had done for their community and allowed them to show that the state had paid attention to the needs of its people. In these instances, it was not clear whether the infrastructure would have contributed to state legitimacy on its own, but it strengthened the position of those encouraging favourable views of the government.

Corruption by key actors within the programme is perhaps the greatest threat to trust and legitimacy associated with the whole of CCAP. The failure to mitigate corruption is perceived by some community members to be a deliberate decision, rather than an act of ignorance.

For questions of trust and legitimacy, one of the important observed throughout this study was that many respondents conceived of CCAP as an entity in its own right. Consequently, the linkage between the activities of CCAP and the legitimacy of other actors was, for certain respondents, somewhat disconnected.

The issue of translation also has a notable impact on the way the programme is received. In Pashto-speaking communities (for this study, Zabul), the translation of Citizens' Charter produces a much more evocative image of connection between the government and the people, than the arcane Dari

translation. This resulted in much greater alignment on views of the objective of CCAP among respondents in Zabul than in the other provinces (or national-level interviews in Kabul).

2. Social fabric

Studied communities reported some social changes, including the increased role of women in community life and collective efforts to address the plight of vulnerable community members.

> *"Before the program our women… were busy doing their daily works. When the program came to our community, it started enlightening the people`s mind. Educated and uneducated people both realized the value of the program by supporting the men and women and our community. After the Citizens' Charter programme, the tailoring courses were opened for women. There is an adult education course on the 6th street. The uneducated women should go there to get education. These things were all done by the Citizens' Charter programme."*

> Male Community Member, Balkh

> *"Before the advent of CCAP, women were not allowed to get out of house due to restrictions put in place by their husbands or their fathers but now they are part of decision-making process, they can take part in meetings, and share their problems and tell what they want."*

> Female CDC Member, Parwan

Not only was CCAP attributed with increasing the role of women in some of the studied communities, but in doing so it apparently opened up new opportunities for community collaboration and development. These changes, however, were linked to successful mobilisation according to the programme design and often required the leadership of entrepreneurial community members who were inspired to take the lessons even further in their pursuit of community prosperity. The communities where this happened benefitted from having pre-existing social conditions in which the lessons of the social mobilisation exercises could readily take hold, but respondents also pointed to the diligent work of social organisers and the incentives of a subproject implemented entirely by women (in Mazar-e-Sharif) as components that encouraged participation and led to more lasting social change.

> *"The poverty analysis was successful. One of the successes was that the food bank was made and people gathered grains and wheat and other foods. This way we assisted the poor… The residents of the area gathered the material and distributed them among the poor families."*

> Male Community Member, Parwan

The wellbeing analysis and seasonal calendar were widely hailed as contributing to greater awareness of poverty within communities. Through both the VGD subcommittee and the specific institution of grain banks in rural communities, communities put this knowledge to use to support those in need. While not representing such a formal position in the urban model of the programme, there were also reports of CDC members mobilising resources to support the poor and vulnerable in their communities in Mazar-e-Sharif, using the knowledge and structures put in place through CCAP to identify those in need and serve effectively.

Though competition over the resources provided by CCAP was linked to conflict in some communities, CDCs were also perceived to be actively involved in conflict resolution in others. While this capacity to aid conflict resolution is sometimes linked to traditional sources of legitimacy for such activities (with CDC members being elected because they were already held in high esteem for similar work rather than vice versa), there were also younger CDC board members who had used their new authority as a platform from which to help resolve disputes.

The clustering process is a potential point where other conflicts can emerge. As such, the issue of the organic creation of clusters is important. While it goes beyond the scope of this study to assess the appropriateness of the clustering process, a few respondents in during national level interviews in Kabul expressed concern that the process had not been as organic as desired.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS

Any conclusions made about a programme as large and complex as the Citizens' Charter are invariably going to be mixed. On the whole, the programme has been quite well received by the target communities. When the infrastructure components are designed and constructed properly — such that they respond to the communities' needs and avoid capture by powerful interests — this aspect of the programme is widely appreciated. Additionally, some communities have already begun to report certain social changes, highlighting new roles for women in their communities and explaining how greater awareness of poverty has contributed to active efforts to help alleviate challenges for the most vulnerable community members.

This positive reception is accompanied by a lack of clarity regarding the fundamental objectives of the programme, and descriptions of the objectives and priorities of Citizens' Charter varied significantly among respondents — going beyond what could easily be attributed to the biases of individual respondents. At the national level, it was not uncommon to hear Citizens' Charter described first and foremost as a governance programme, designed to promote state legitimacy and further establish a reliable system of subnational governance (with clusters / gozars, CDCs, and subcommittees as key units of this system). Among other respondents (including many at the community level), comments about reducing poverty or building infrastructure tended to be prioritised.

One of the most compelling descriptions that was shared throughout this process (by a respondent who has engaged in numerous conversations with the World Bank team managing the project) was that Citizens' Charter is a poverty reduction programme that uses the governance structures and focus on the attainment of minimum services standards to create the necessary foundation for further improvements in prosperity around the country. Such a vision was not widely enunciated, so if that is the guiding logic behind the intervention, it would be beneficial to communicate that much more explicitly to the various actors, including all levels of facilitating partners and relevant line ministries.

The actual rollout of CCAP was constrained by an evolving security environment that made project implementation significantly more difficult in many locations than had originally been anticipated during the planning stages. While an effort to adapt to some of these changes was reflected in the development of the High Risk Areas Implementation Strategy (HRAIS), the strategy was not widely applied and, consequently, its impact has been limited thus far.

While substantial progress has been made, the general consensus among respondents at the national level seemed to be that at least six additional months would be required to finish Phase 1. Even with a six-month extension, FPs reported that certain mobilisation requirements, such as completing all rounds of scorecards or fulfilling all of the CDC cross visits, might be difficult within the allotted time, whether due to delays in subproject implementation or challenges in the security environment.

Overall, the rural model of CCAP has a subtle agricultural bias that permeates its design. Example

categories for the wellbeing analysis are based around landownership, the 'grain bank' elicits images of reserves for agricultural produce, and the options for infrastructure subprojects (especially irrigation systems) are most well-suited for farming communities. The needs of mining or trading communities, or even communities with a heavy reliance on livestock rather than crops, could be better represented in project design.

On the whole, Citizens' Charter appears to target the needs of individuals and communities in a way that is meaningful and well-received. The processes and tools involved can be quite beneficial when implemented properly, but rigorous implementation is not always evident and proper mechanisms for following up and ensuring accountability would benefit from being strengthened. For the soft components, this could include steps to address inflated figures for voter turnout and participation in the various social mobilisation exercises; for the hard component, further efforts to combat corruption or capture during the subproject approval process would serve to improve community perceptions of the process.

Key questions deserving further attention include the following:
- Is combining poverty reduction and governance promotion in a single programme the best way to attain each objective? If so, what synergies should be explored and prioritised?
- Is the current timeline for the geographic expansion of Citizens' Charter the best way to ensure lasting improvements on both poverty reduction and governance, especially in the current security environment? Does the lapse in time between NSP and CCNPP lead to losses in the existing structures that had been created? Alternatively, does the rate of roll out (in limited number of block grants per community) allow for the thorough consolidation of gains? What happens to communities included in Phase 1 after the completion of subproject implementation?
- Are there ways to better maintain community engagement and enthusiasm during the period of time between the start of social mobilisation and the commencement of subproject construction?
- Are the funds available for the program adequate? Are there best practices which might address concerns about community engagement or the consolidation of gains which cannot be widely applied due to financial constraints?
- What is the best way to distribute responsibilities in the upcoming phases so as to utilise the comparative advantages of the PMUs, FPs, and other actors?
- Has the clustering process been conducted in a manner that effectively incorporates and addresses the existing, organic social structures? Can clusters and gozars feasibly take on additional responsibilities to relieve administrative burdens on the government (since managing, funding, and coordinating worth with clusters would involve fewer entities than working directly with communities)? If clusters do receive additional attention in the future, are the risks that the existing cluster boundaries will contribute to conflicts?
- How can the Citizens' Charter process be designed to better incorporate conflict sensitivity?
- How can a contractual structure be revised to allow FPs to comfortably withdraw if continuing facilitation in a community would require them to violate redlines?
- How can all actors ensure that their work follows the principle of 'Do No Harm'?
- How can Citizens' Charter be used to help support the sustainability of a potential peace agreement? Are there steps that could be taken before an agreement is reached to help

build / attain peace?

SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The hope is that lessons learned from this research can be used to inform future implementation of the Citizens' Charter, particularly by guiding conversations for the design of Phase 2 of the programme. As such, the following recommendations are included to provide specific action points for key actors within the programme, especially the Afghan government, World Bank, and facilitating partner NGOs. The recommendations are broken into two sections, Vision and Implementation, which broadly categorise the level at which the decisions and actions would need to be taken.

A. Vision

1. The government and World Bank should seek to harmonize the narrative for the project to clarify their vision for poverty reduction, governance, and service delivery. This common narrative should then be communicated effectively to motivate and guide proper implementation and facilitation. This will require serious engagement between the government and FPs (who currently think their visions align, despite notable divergence on various points), as well as intentional communication throughout all levels of both. This communication should include feedback loops to ensure that the core messages are not just repeated verbatim but truly internalised and agreed upon (which may require debate and adaptations).

2. The government and World Bank should re-engage with the FPs on standards for facilitation to ensure there is a common understanding of what those standards should be and why they are critical to the programme's success. FPs should come to this conversation with a collective assessment of what is feasible in various contexts, as well as suggestions for contingency planning (defining appropriate responses in instances where, for example, only 55 percent of community members participate in the election of the CDC). This should be supplemented by a conversation on the time and resources required to attain key project objectives in line with these priorities and standards. The conversation should also include a conversation about promoting substantive engagement for women in the programme. A range of challenges from cultural norms to security constrain women's participation throughout the country, so ensuring that key objectives are met will require investment. When an agreement is reached, both the government and FPs should communicate this narrative throughout all levels of their operations. This will help to overcome the disconnect in the vision between senior management and frontline staff, and will help community members to realise what they stand to gain by mobilising according to the standards.

3. Redlines regarding acceptable conduct for all CCAP actors need to be clearly enunciated and communicated throughout all levels of the programme. The specific list of redlines will need to be based on a thorough assessment of risks and priorities, however potential redlines include the diversion of funding, falsification of data, or institution of barriers to prevent certain segments of the community from full participation (whether women, minorities, IDPs, etc.). While a degree of flexibility in the response may be appropriate (based on the seriousness of the offense and other mitigating circumstances), the consequences for

violating a redline should be stated explicitly and accompanied by mechanisms for enforcement that increase the chance that violations will be detected.

4. As Phases 2 and 3 are expected to cover communities that are, on average, more remote or insecure than those covered under Phase 1, a renewed conversation should be had on issues of access and safeguarding. Of particular importance will be discussions regarding the principle of 'Do No Harm' and measures to prevent the diversion of development funding. Additionally, the government should provide FPs with additional clarity regarding its stance on negotiations and access, and make sure that its stated position is clearly communicated to security officials at the provincial levels to avoid misunderstandings in the field. It might be helpful to consider an 'open door' policy where the emphasis is less on trying to roll out Citizens' Charter everywhere, but rather making resources available to communities that demonstrate that they want the assistance and are willing take the steps to make it feasible (negotiating with the Taliban, etc.).

5. The government should engage with FPs in discussions about evolving responsibilities in subsequent phases of the Citizens' Charter. A key objective of these conversations would be to address the current uncertainties regarding the role that FPs will play in Phases 2 and 3. Should the original objective of handing over responsibilities to the PMUs or other government actors still be deemed feasible and a priority, planning for such a process must be conducted thoroughly and should contain different contingency plans related to the various possible outcomes in the ongoing peace negotiations. It should also take into account the current security environment and the extent to which the situation has changed since original plans were developed at the inception of the programme. Even if the phasing out of FPs simply refers to the process of handing over responsibilities at the conclusion of social mobilisation, efforts should be made to ensure that the proper measures are in place to ensure that communities have the support required to sustain the benefits of the social mobilisation process.

B. Implementation

1. Steps should be taken to better manage expectations during community development planning. FPs should ensure that social organisers have an appropriate understanding of the linkage between the MSS and the ultimate decisions regarding subproject financing — a process that differs between the urban and rural models of CCAP. They should also clarify what communities can expect from subsequent phases of the project and what (including additional block grants, upgraded health facilities, etc.) is outside of the scope of the project.

2. A related issue is that of boundaries: the government and World Bank should revisit the situation of communities whose conditions are much more similar to those of communities covered by the urban model of CCAP than the rural model (including other provincial capitals and major cities, as well as peri-urban communities surrounding the largest cities). If financially and strategically viable, it might be beneficial to expand the urban MSS for these communities.

3. Plans should also be made for the eventual extension of MSS to all citizens and communities — including small communities in particularly remote locations which were excluded from participation in CCNPP due to the current eligibility criteria.

4. If the Citizens' Charter is to become a permanent platform for the delivery of minimum service standards to all Afghan citizens for years to come, the planning and budgeting process would benefit from intentional consideration of how best to integrate the community development plans (CDPs) into provincial development plans (PDPs), ultimately creating a continuum from the National Priority Programs (NPPs) to the CDPs.[26] This link needs to explain how small-scale infrastructure at the community level will connect to the network of primary and secondary infrastructure that either exists or is set to be created at the national and provincial levels. The process should be accompanied by the formalization of roles and funding streams through the village and gozar laws.

5. The government and World Bank should conduct a study on the evolution of power dynamics over the course of NSP and CCAP — along with the impact on quality of life — to improve collective understanding of how the programmes have affected the social fabric of the communities. The findings of this study should feed into future adaptations to project design.

6. IDLG should lead a review of the various governance structures in both urban and rural areas (CDCs, CCDCs, GAs, etc.) to measure commitment to each platform and guide efforts to optimise the distribution of responsibilities, authorities, and resources at the subnational level — including the roles of provincial and district governments. The study should also seek to identify the extent to which the catchment areas of each structure (especially communities and clusters) are organic entities or synthetic creations and assess whether the existing boundaries of each could lead to resistance or conflict in the future. The findings of this review should be reflected in the village and gozar laws, and should set priorities for engagement during future rounds of Citizens' Charter and other government programmes.

7. Subcommittee structure should be updated and the number of subcommittees should be reduced. This would include streamlining tasks, considering contextual adaptations, and revisiting the optimal linkage of health and education subcommittees to health facilities and schools.

8. MRRD should engage with FPs to refine the handover process from the FPs to the PMUs to minimise downtime between social mobilisation and subproject implementation. While likely to bring challenges of its own, this could possibly be addressed by altering the phasing of social mobilisation. Activities such as the leaking pot — which is useful for reducing poverty, but not necessarily vital to the community development planning process — could be moved to coincide with the PMUs preparatory engineering assessments so that

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[26] ATR is currently conducting a UNDP-funded study on local planning and budgeting processes in Afghanistan that will include recommendations regarding this point. Subsequent research and reform efforts should be able to draw upon those findings once they have been published.

momentum could be sustained until the start of subproject construction.

9. Investments in government capacity should seek to integrate the capabilities of the PMUs with those of the permanent civil servants. Intentionally carving out time to allow civil servants to participate more fully in the Citizens' Charter trainings would help to further institutionalise gains, as would engaging them more actively in policy-level conversations. Additionally, as weaknesses in government capacity are identified, these should be documented and ultimately incorporated into intentional measures to remedy the issues.

10. The CCAP manuals are lengthy documents that can be difficult to fully comprehend. This challenge is exacerbated when individuals have had limited educational opportunities or previous exposure to many of the ideas that they contain. In locations where challenges are anticipated, planning for additional time and resources to tailor trainings to the needs of the staff member will help to ensure the staff fully comprehend their responsibilities and are able to fulfil their roles without compromising on standards for quality. Mastery should be documented through tests or other means, with plans for additional rounds of coaching when test results are too low. Additional supplementary materials with visuals could help with comprehension of key points.

11. For the rural model of Citizens' Charter, MRRD should adapt the reporting lines for internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E), ultimately creating a separate branch of the programme to ensure the independence and reliability of findings. As a first step, MRRD's M&E unit at the provincial level should be detached from the PMU, allowing it to report deviations in PMU performance directly to headquarters in Kabul when necessary. This measure should be accompanied by steps to ensure that monitoring findings are disseminated effectively to promote learning and uptake, and that responses are tracked effectively to ensure accountability in remediation of errors.

12. The government should work with FPs to ensure that complaints mechanisms have appropriate avenues for by-passing the CDCs when necessary. An important first step would be to ensure that communities have the appropriate phone numbers posted, with a call centre located in Kabul to insulate it from local politics and power struggles. Additionally, the creation of an online grievance redressal mechanism could provide an additional avenue for reporting. In each instance, it would be important to monitor how long it takes for grievances to be addressed.

13. The government should invest in a strategic communications campaign to counter misinformation and corruption. By providing another channel through which community members can learn about the Citizens' Charter processes and standards, this will promote social accountability and trust in the programme.

ANNEX 1: REFERENCES

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ANNEX 2: ORGANISATIONS OF RESPONDENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

A. Government Entities

National Level
- Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
- Independent Directorate of Local Governance
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Public Health

Provincial Level
- Provincial Management Units (urban and rural)
- Directorate of Education
- Directorate of Public Health

B. Facilitating Partners and Workshop Participants

FPs for Target Provinces
- ACTED – Balkh (Khulm)
- AHDS – Zabul
- CHA – Parwan
- NPO/RRAA – Balkh (Mazar-e-Sharif)
- SDO – Zabul

Additional Respondents and Workshop Participants
- ACBAR
- ActionAid
- Afghan Aid
- ADDO
- AKDN
- BRAC
- CARE
- Concern
- DACAAR
- FGA
- IWA
- The Johanniter
- Oxfam
- ORCD
- RI
- SCA

ABOUT ATR CONSULTING

Assess, Transform, Reach (ATR) is an Afghan-owned consulting firm which provides monitoring and evaluation, socioeconomic research, strategic advisory, and capacity development services to development practitioners in conflict-affected countries. ATR takes pride in providing high-quality data collection, rigorous analysis, and deep contextual understanding to help inform the design of more effective policies and programmes.

Since its founding in 2012, ATR has worked extensively with community-driven development in Afghanistan. Recent work includes the completion of an in-depth study for the World Bank on CCAP's interaction with conflict and fragility across five target provinces. The findings from that study provide a complementary perspective to the results laid out in this report.