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Focused Study Report. Exploring Rural Livelihoods in Afghanistan: A study of two villages in Dai Kundi province.

By: Dr. Ingrid Nyborg and Linn Jaeckle

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Photo (cover): Masrook village, Daikundi 2014. Photo by Jawad Bahonar GRSP
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We would like to express our thanks first to Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) Oslo, for their interest in collaborating on this study – we knew from the start that this would be an interesting endeavor linking research and practice, and we were not disappointed. We would also like to thank NCA-Afghanistan for their support of the study/training exercise. Their enthusiasm and dedication in the planning, implementation and follow-up of the study has been impressive and very motivating for both of us. We would also like to thank NCA's partner institutions for supporting this study through making their staff available for several weeks for what we hope was a valuable learning experience for both them and their organizations. Finally, we would like to thank the villagers from Masrook and Qwame Bocha for spending so many days with us sharing their concerns and ideas, both in the interviews and in the workshops. We truly appreciate the warm reception given to us, and the sincerity in which they communicated with us. We do hope this study will contribute in a positive way to their lives as they continue to work with NCA's partners in the coming years.

List of Abbreviations

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
CCA	Cooperation Center for Afghanistan
CDC	Community Development Council[1]
COAR	Coordination of Afghan Relief
FHH	Female Headed Household
GRSP	Ghazni Rural Support Programme
GWO	Green Way Organization
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Norwegian Project Office
NSP	National Solidarity Program[2]
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
RCDC	Rural Capacity Development Committee (RCDC)
STARS	Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

[1] Community Development Councils (CDCs) were introduced by the National Solidarity Program (NSP). The CDC is official entity of the government of Afghanistan and responsible for community emergency and development activities on the ground. CDC idea is rooted in Afghan traditions of "Ashar" and "Jirga". "Ashar" refers to community members working together on a volunteer basis to improve community infrastructure. "Jirga" refers to a council, comprised of respected members of the community, which focuses on Islamic values of unity, equity and justice. CDC is known as "Milli Paiwastoon" in Pashto language and as "Hambastagi Milli" in Dari language. Villagers often refer to CDC as Shura. Shura is an traditional entity on village level that holds authority and makes important decisions. Derived from the Arabic word for consultation, the Shura makes decisions in consultation with the other members of the group, or those called to give an opinion. Traditionally only men are part of the Shura and Shura is not held accountable for their actions. NSP works to transform the Shura into more representative CDCs.

[2] National Solidarity Program (NSP) was launched mid-2003 by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

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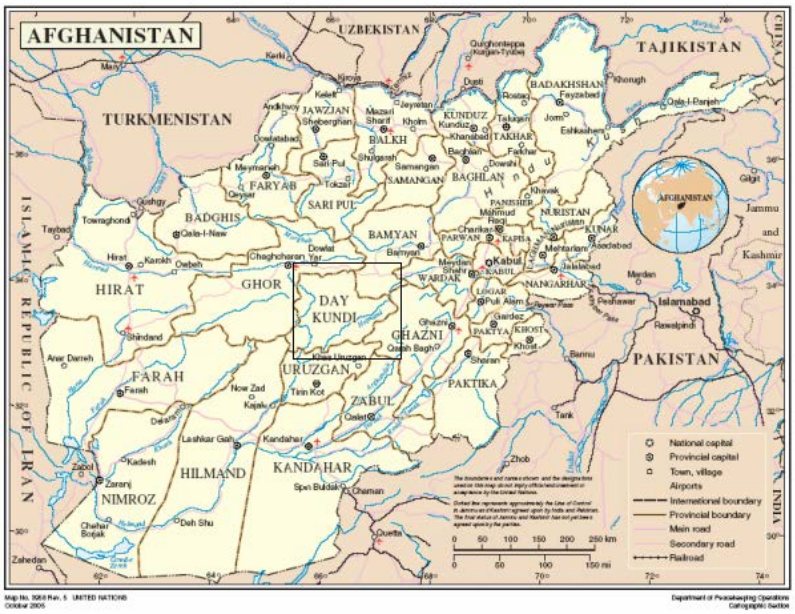
Introduction

Introduction and purpose of the focused study

NCA Afghanistan conducted a Focused Study in two villages of Dai Kundi in the period 12-22 October 2014. The main purpose of the focused study was to ensure that NCA and its partners develop and use the required skills and methods for collecting qualitative data (e.g. interview techniques, selection of informants, etc.), for analyzing community situations and documenting and reporting change and/or life stories. The study would also allow NCA partners and staff to gain in-depth knowledge of these two communities where NCA already were, or were planning to implement development activities. The study was facilitated by Dr. Ingrid Nyborg, Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU).

Study Area

Dai Kundi is one of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The province is located in the central part of Afghanistan. Dai Kundi was officially established as its own province in 2004, previously being a remote district of Uruzgan district. The estimated population of the province is 723, 980, with the Hazara tribe being the main ethnic group. Dai Kundi is located 310 km from Kabul with limited accessibility due to poor road quality, landslides and the closing of mountain passes during the winter months. The landscape is mountainous, with very little arable land and a harsh climate. In addition the region has been experiencing a drought for the past nine years. When precipitation comes, it is often in large amounts at once, resulting in flooding and erosion of topsoil. The economic situation in Dai Kundi is poor, and the income resources of the province are agriculture and animal husbandry. Dai Kundi is one of the poorest areas of Afghanistan, and consequently the facilities of healthcare and education are minimal.



Source: United Nations, Dept. of Field Support

Study Villages

The study was conducted in two villages in Ashtarlai district of Dai Kundi province. The villages were chosen such that one village, Masrook, had begun implementing NCA

activities since the previous year (2013), while the other village, Qwame Bocha, was one in which NCA planned to start working with (2014/15).

1) Approach and methodology

Analytical Framework

The study uses a human security framework, where human security is defined by the UN (1994) as 'freedom from want and freedom from fear' in one's everyday life, and includes at least seven components of security: economic security; food security; health security; environmental security; personal (physical) security; community security; and political security. Within this framework, the concept of livelihood security is particularly central, as a way to understand the complex nature of communities as they try to make a living in often difficult contexts. By using a human security framework, we can better explore the multitude of insecurities faced by community women and men, how they may be interconnected, and what strategies they use or might wish to use in dealing with them. Despite the fact that the study was conducted in an area inhabited mainly by one ethnic group, the Hazara, we could not assume that the communities were homogeneous in other ways. We therefore focused on learning about difference within the communities, whether based on gender, wealth, livelihood, or any other factor that might surface during the study.

Methodology

Two villages in Dai Kundi were chosen for the study, Qwame Bocha and Masrook, based on the level of NCA activities, the need for information from the villages, and the distance from the office where we would be based in the field. The study team was comprised of 6 NCA's program staff and 18 local partner staff working in Dai Kundi. The team was divided into two sub-teams, one for each village. Training of the teams was conducted through a series of preparatory workshops held in Kabul, Nilli and Ashtalai (see earlier report to NCA describing the competence building process).

A qualitative question guide was developed organized around the following themes: demography, history, wealth and food security, livelihood strategies, power relations, water and sanitation, security and humanitarian and development interventions. This question guide was used as the basis for all of the interviewing.

The teams used a combination of village meetings, focus groups, key informant interviews, life histories, and observation to gather data. The focus groups (about 5 people in each group) were formed according to wealth and gender, such that there were a minimum of 6 focus groups in each village: Well-off male, well-off female, middle male, middle female, and poor male, poor female. In addition, there were interviews with landowners and tenants separately. The teams used about three days in each village.

Analysis was done in stages. The first stage was in the evenings after each field day, when groups went carefully through their data to identify gaps and adjust for the next day of questions. The second stage was during the preparation of the materials for the

community workshop, where data was compared, summarized and presented. The third stage was during the discussions at the workshop. The fourth stage was the preparation of the Village Profiles, and the fifth stage was the preparation of the report. The NCA partners and staff participated in the first three stages, and NCA staff continued into the fourth and fifth stage. Dr. Nyborg was joined by a research assistant, Linn Jaeckle, in the fourth and fifth stages.

Limitations of study

The study was limited in scope to two villages, and its results can therefore not be immediately generalized to all the villages in the province. Also, since this was a training exercise, the quality of the data was uneven, improving significantly over the time we were in the field. By the end of the field study, however, the data was of extremely good quality. There may, however, continue to be discrepancies in the data due to the process of learning. For example, although women and men were interviewed separately, and the staff discussed the differences during the stages of analysis, this was not always made clear in the English translation of the interviews, and thus gendered dimensions are less detailed in this report. Also, it was not always clear in the English translation what was data from the respondents, and what was the interpretation of the interviewers. Some of this was cleared up by email and Skype consultations with the staff during the writing of this report, but some remains unclear. This might have been reduced with a follow-up workshop during the writing of the report where more of the original interviewers were present. Finally, quite a bit of time passed between the fieldwork and the writing of this report (due to unavoidable delays by both NCA and Noragric staff), making it difficult to recall details. Nevertheless, we feel the exercise was valuable for all who participated, and hope that this report conveys some of the findings we have managed to pull out of the data that was collected.

Analysis and presentation of findings

This section summarizes and comments the most important findings of the study. A more comprehensive account of the findings can be found in the village profiles of the two study villages. This section is organized around the themes, which were guiding the interview conversations and questionnaires:

1) History, Demography, Infrastructure
2) Wealth, Land Ownership and Use
3) Food and Livelihood Security and Vulnerability
4) Livelihood Strategies
5) Land Issues
6) Water
7) Health, Hygiene and Sanitation
7) Power Relations
8) Security and Humanitarian and Development Interventions

2) History, Demography and Infrastructure

This chapter provides some basic background information on the history, demography, and basic infrastructure of the two rural study villages, Qwame Bocha and Masrook, both located in Ashtalai District of Dai Kundi Province.

History and demography
People started settling in Qwame Bocha about 250 years ago. While most of today's inhabitants are from the surrounding area (Khoshak), some have immigrated from other provinces such as Ghazni. Masrook village was founded around 100 years ago and all of the current inhabitants have their origin within the village.

The last 30 years have brought economic and cultural changes, which in interplay with the war and heavy droughts brought a general rise in economic poverty, which again led to out-migration of many villagers. Villagers from both villages migrated to other areas in Afghanistan, or to neighboring countries like Iran and Pakistan. Yearly reoccurring droughts and the war had and continue to negatively impact the district. Both villages, only a few hour's drive apart, face similar climatic conditions and share the war history.

Qwame Bocha consists of 11 small hamlets, which extend over the surface of 8 square kilometers. The village is made up of 91 households, 228 families, 936 people; of which 244 are women, 224 are men and 468 are children (children < 18 years old).

Masrook population is much smaller, with only 23 households, 26 families, and 156 people. Both villages have a majority of the population being women, but only Qwame Bocha village has female-headed households. 15 households in Qwame Bocha are female-headed households (FHH), with 10 of them being widows.

There were two reasons given for the occurrence of FFH in Qwame Bocha. Firstly, Qwame Bocha has many men doing labor work in for example mining which requires them to live outside the village. Therefore some households, which in theory would have a potential male head, are left without any present male candidate and thus a woman has filled in. Secondly, Qwame Bocha, compared with Masrook, was more directly impacted by the war, resulting in the relatively high number of widows. The lack of male candidates for the head of household could have also created the necessity of women becoming the head of the household, outweighing the cultural norm of male family members being the head of households.

Neither village has landless people, sharecroppers or returnees ("returnees" refers to households and families who migrated and have returned). Masrook counts 2 disabled people (ca. 2%) and Qwame Bocha, the larger village, counts around 20 disabled people (ca. 1%).

Infrastructure
Government services and infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, sanitation facilities, markets, roads are limited or absent. Both villages lack basic health and

sanitation infrastructure and have very few educational facilities. Neither village has shops or markets located inside the village. This makes villagers highly dependent on continuous physical mobility in order to access the above-mentioned facilities in other villages. Physical access is however often prevented by road blockage due to floods, soil avalanches, heavy snowfall, or security threats.

Neither village has a general hospital or doctor where people could seek treatment and help. In Masrook, however, there is an NGO-financed midwifery-practice[3]. Women in Masrook do use this clinic. There is an additional mobile team connected to this clinic that deals with certain diseases and vaccines as well. This mobile team also conducts health awareness training for villagers and offers concrete skills training for those who work in the clinic. There is no government or locally run and financed health clinic, though. In Qwame Bocha the closest health facility is located a five-hour walk away.

Government funding does not suffice to run the schools and thus schools are highly dependent on additional financial input by the parents. School expenses, which need to be covered, vary from renting a school building, teachers, guards, teaching supplies and even food for the teachers. The village or the parents are, however, not able to cover all these expenses which results in no or very poor education facilities. Villagers expressed the need for funding for proper teaching facilities. There is no public school in Masrook village, but UNICEF offers a course for children between first and third grade - currently 28 students are enrolled. Qwame Bocha has an elementary school in the village, which is located in a rented house paid for by the people of the village. According to the villagers the house does not have the facilities required for professional teaching. The secondary school is located at three-hour walking distance from the village. The far distance of the school is problematic because it requires students to walk long hours in cold weather during winter and it prevents girls from attending school at all, as parents consider it too dangerous for girls to walk for several hours. Parents mention an additional issue related to poorly paid teachers: only poorly educated “teachers” will accept a low salary and they will demand the parents to pay for their food. Due to these challenges, some parents cannot afford to send their children to school.

An important point to consider when looking at the education situation is the infrastructural and geographical security dimension of the schools. The geographical location of the school determines if girls can attend school because it is too dangerous for girls to walk several hours between the village and the school. A centrally located, guarded, and possibly fenced school ground seems to be a precondition for both boys and girls to attend school.

When asked about tangible change development interventions brought to the village, Masrook villagers say that some villagers used to be opposed to sending girls to school, and nowadays they are not. Such statements suggest both that there used to be opposition to girls attending school, and that group discussions and workshops are fruitful platforms to discuss such sensitive but shifting positions. The gender distribution

[3] The midwifery-practice is financed by the Move Welfare Organisation.

of the student population at the elementary school in Qwame Bocha is, according to the respondents, 60% boys and 40% girls. These numbers show that there are more boys attending, yet it also shows that many girls are indeed enrolled in school. The question remains if they actually attend school. Villagers in both Masrook and Qwame Bocha say that there are no obstacles for either boys or girls to attend school. Numbers of enrollment, descriptions of schools, and comments by villagers suggest otherwise. There are clearly infrastructural shortcomings, safety issues, financial obstacles and gender discriminating norms, which are preventing some boys and girls from attending school (see Section 9 for more on gender issues).

Public infrastructure in Masrook reveals the village's dependence on NGOs. NGOs have been present and are part of shaping Masrook village's infrastructure and people live to a point where NGOs have become an integral part of peoples' livelihoods and problem-solving strategies. Poor, medium and rich groups rely on NGO-financed and run facilities and expect to rely on them in future as well. NGOs provide services that under other circumstances might be executed by a government branch. Qwame Bocha, on the other hand, has had to rely on government initiatives without many basic and most needed infrastructure.

3) Wealth, and Land Ownership and Use

To understand the distribution of land and wealth better the farmers were asked to divide themselves in three wealth groups (well-off, medium and poor). They divided themselves according to the land and livestock they own. Criteria for determining different wealth groups were decided by the villagers. Households that are here defined as "well-off" households are better off than the ones classified as "medium" or "poor"; however, members of "well-off" households understand themselves as being *better off* than a poor household and not necessarily as well-off or rich *per se*.

Wealth Group Criteria

The criteria used by the villagers to divide themselves into wealth groups were basically the same in the two villages. Overall, a household is well-off when it owns between 5 to 15 sheep or goat, 1 to 3 oxen or cows, between 3 and 5 *jeribs* (1 *jerib* = 2,000 m2) of land, and harvests 160 seer (1,120 kg) wheat from his land. A wealthy household might also have a family or family member working outside the province who sends home remittances. Another indicator of wealthier status could be that a family has two or more laborers working for them. A household is labeled as medium when it owns 5 goats or sheep, 1 cow and around 2 *jeribs* of land. Also a medium household could have 1 or 2 laborers working for them. A household is perceived as poor when it only owns around 0.5 - 1 *jerib* of land and no livestock. Even a poor household might, however, employ a laborer as well.

Neither village has landless people or sharecroppers, and Masrook had no returnees. Between 1 and 2% of the village population is disabled on average[4]. According to the local definition of criteria of the different wealth classes, the largest percentage of the village belongs to the group labeled as poor and the smallest percentage to the one labeled as rich. Wealth distribution in terms of livestock shows that it is livestock ownership that makes the big difference in the income of a household. It is the well-off group which owns the most, and significantly more livestock than the medium and poor group.

Land use

Both villages only use a fraction of the land of the village for agricultural purposes. Qwame Bocha uses 5 % of the land for agricultural purposes, 45% is pastureland and the remaining 50% is non-arable land used mainly for housing. Masrook village uses 15% of the land for agriculture and the remaining 85% of pastureland (the data does not give any information on land used for housing in Masrook). Pastureland is used for animal grazing, collecting animal fodder, and collecting bushes for heating and cooking fuel. In Masrook, 10% of agricultural land is rain-fed. In Qwame Bocha all the cultivated land is irrigated, there is no rain-fed agricultural land in Qwame Bocha.

Problems that arise around land are numerous. People struggle with snow avalanches, landslides, floods and droughts destroying land and harvest. Both villages struggle with a lack of water for irrigating land. In Qwame Bocha the water scarcity is so extreme that only half of the arable land is cultivated. Pastureland is being heavily degraded and has gotten barren through the custom of uprooting bushes and trees for fodder and fuel for cooking. Occasionally this practice of uprooting bushes on pastureland can lead to conflict as well.

In Masrook village the distribution of land among the different wealth groups sheds light on the particular struggles the poor villagers face throughout the year. The poor own significantly less land than the well-off - around 1.5 *jerib* of land in comparison to 5 *jeribs* of land owned by the well-off. This small amount of land is in addition usually rain-fed, bringing a lower yield than irrigated land and allowing for a smaller variety crops for cultivation. (See Section 4 for more information on crops.)

4) Food and Livelihood Security and Vulnerability

This section summarizes and comments on the overall picture, the similarities and differences of the food and livelihood security and vulnerability of people belonging to different wealth classes and villages.

No wealth group is able to produce enough harvest for own consumption for a whole year. But there are large differences in terms of degree to which this limit of self-sufficiency affects a household's food security. In Masrook the wealthier groups live off

[4] People who are disabled due to their elevated age are defined as disabled by the villagers as well.

their produce for around six months, and the poor for around three months. In Qwame Bocha even the wealthiest group's harvest only last for a maximum of three months, which is how long the poor wealth groups' harvest of Masrook lasts. The poor groups' harvest in Qwame Bocha lasts for as little as one or two months. The differences between wealth groups and between villages are large – the only common factor is that no one's harvest lasts for the whole year and that everyone has to purchase food from the local market for the rest of the year.

Both villages are dependent on physical access to food markets and delivery from outside the village and are thus exposed to food insecurity when the connecting roads are blocked. Thus additional food insecurity (which affects all wealth classes and both villages) occurs when the roads needed to access food markets are blocked due to floods, snow, and avalanches.

The source of income and food varies strongly between villages. People in Masrook village are much more reliant on their own agricultural produce than in Qwame Bocha. In a medium level household in Qwame Bocha, only 20% of the food consumed comes from its own produce (10% agriculture and 10% livestock) and the remaining 80% of income (to buy food) is earned through labor work. In Masrook 40-60 % of food consumed (by all wealth classes) comes from their own production. Another 40-60% is purchased by their own money or by loan money. The remaining 10 -20% comes from either NGOs or government aid and from people's charities, gifts and aids. There is no government aid or NGO helping out with food insecurity in Qwame Bocha. Since Qwame Bocha is only able to cultivate half of their arable land due to water scarcity, the higher dependence on income labor is an important livelihood strategy. It is difficult to say, however, whether an increase in water availability for production would result in a decrease in the need for labor income – different households would likely choose different strategies depending on factors such as labor availability in the household and prices of agricultural produce. This would need further investigation with the villagers.

In both villages, hard times are met by additional labor work locally (in agriculture or mining), work outside the country, by selling livestock or by borrowing money. People (usually belonging to the poor and medium group) can borrow money or take up a loan from someone belonging to the wealthy group. Such loans are given informally by neighbors, friends and other villagers. The credit or loan system is not formally institutionalized – there is no government, NGO or bank run credit institution in the village.

One can get a loan in the villages through different methods, and under different terms. One can take up a loan with interest, where one for example borrows 1000 Afghanis and then pays back 1500 or 2000 Afghanis within a set time frame. Or one can purchase food on credit, which is more expensive than buying from the market. The money to pay back the loan with interest is earned by labor work in coal mines and other labor work outside the province. It is entirely up to the person lending the money whether to demand interest or not.

While this loan system offers a short-term solution to the financial shortages of struggling households, it also creates a vicious circle where the poor stay poor and indebted. This informal payback system of loans does not allow the poor to save money to be able to buy food when needed, because they need to pay back their loans and credit. Considering that the poor have less land and of poor quality, and can live off their own produce for only a short time, they remain indebted. This not only makes the poor poorer, but also more vulnerable than the medium and the well-off group. Alternative livelihood options which reduce the poor's dependence on credit for their basic needs would also reduce this vulnerability and could give them the possibility of positive, sustainable change.

The ways in which different households discussed their food insecurity revealed the very different options available to them. Poor households mention that they have to take up loans, how they go about taking up loans, how they talk about their food insecurity with their neighbors, and most importantly how they say that they need to buy the food on credit when their own harvest does not suffice. The well-off on the other hand talk about where and what kind of food they buy when their own harvest does not suffice. They describe how they get additional money through labor work and selling livestock. The well-off do not mention a monetary problem or barrier when the food does not suffice, thus their food insecurity seems more related to availability of food, rather than affordability of food. The poor are food insecure in terms of both affordability and availability of food.

Moreover, the well-off say they have a lot of land, but that the harvest is not good due to lack of water, thus they do not have enough food for an entire year. The poor, however, lack both water and land.

In Qwame Bocha, for example, around 50% of potential arable land is not cultivated due to lack of water. Consequently, increased access of water through an improved irrigation system could allow an increase in the amount of land cultivated and, as such, increase the harvest and thus improve food and livelihood security. The data are not clear on the distribution of uncultivated arable land among the different wealth groups in Qwame Bocha, thus it is unclear who and if the more vulnerable groups would benefit from. This needs further clarification. There is no selling of land in either village, thus an increase in irrigation possibilities would only increase the harvest or income of households that own arable land which they currently are not cultivating. Nevertheless, both villages have been affected by a continuous drought the last years and all people through all wealth classes of both villages mention drought and lack of water as problems.

5) Livelihood Strategies

Labor and Migration

Labor and migration vary between the study villages. Whereas in Masrook village people rely mainly on agriculture and livestock to provide for their livelihood, in Qwame Bocha,

people mainly rely on labor work to provide for their livelihood. Agriculture, and keeping livestock, is performed inside the village. Labor work, however, is found outside the village in, for example, coal mines, and requires male household members to leave the village and live outside the village for months at a time. This kind of migration can be both short-term and long-term. It is thanks to the remittances of these men that the households back in the village can cover expenses such as for food and clothing, and send children to school. While both villages know of this possibility, in Qwame Bocha this is a very common livelihood strategy, whereas in Masrook this livelihood option is rather rare.

This outflow of men not only reflects the livelihood strategy of a household, but also contributes to changing the household structure. In a household where the older men follow labor work outside the village and therefore are not present at home, a woman can become the new authority or head of the house and can make important everyday decisions while her husband is away.

The first migration happened 35 years ago because of bad economic conditions and internal violent fights and threats. Migrants were from all categories, but migration is costly, therefore it was mainly the wealthier people and households that migrated. In Masrook there are no returnees, whereas in Qwame Bocha there are people who returned after security improved in the village in early 2001. In Masrook the reason for migration was poor economic conditions and a bad security situation; thus people left in order to find a more secure location and a better source of income. Some found work within the war related job sector and didn't return because the economic living conditions were simply too bad in the village. It appears that in Qwame Bocha people migrated "mostly" due to security reasons and therefore when security was reinstalled or improved they returned. None of the survey villages has become a destination for migration, though; economic conditions are simply too poor.

Villagers in Qwame Bocha told there have not been any conflicts with returnees. The land of the people who had migrated had not been misused, thus the land was not a problem when those people returned. While migration has the potential of improving a livelihood through migrating to a securer and economically more stable area, migration often means that children cannot continue their education. Reasons for migration and nature of migration are closely linked, and were of three main types: 1) whole families migrating due to insecurity brought by war and armed conflict; 2) whole families migrating due to poverty and food insecurity caused by continuous droughts and unemployment; 3) individual males migrating in order to access the exterior labor market to be able to send home remittances. These individuals are not considered as returnees. In all cases, migration was a response to security threats to lives and livelihoods, both in terms of human security and food security.

Agriculture

There is a difference between what people grow on rain-fed and on irrigated land in the two study villages. The cultivation possibilities and yield is higher on irrigated than on

rain-fed land, such that irrigated land is considered better land. According to the farmers of both villages rain-fed land allows for the cultivation of mainly wheat and chickpeas, while irrigated land on the other hand allows for the cultivation of various fruits (such as almonds, apricots and apples), grains (such as wheat, maize and barley), pulses (such as beans, chick-peas, alfalfa- and mung-beans), and vegetables (such as potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, cauliflower, leek, turnip, coriander, radish and carrots).

Wheat, maize and barley are the most valued and most grown crops in both villages and by all wealth classes. What exactly people grow varies between villages and wealth classes, based on the amount and type of land that people own and the livelihood strategy that they follow. The well-off grow on average up to 15 crops, and the poor around four. The rich tend to have better land (meaning they own irrigated land) and therefore they can grow a greater variety of crops.

Poor families rely primarily on their own produce as source of food, but agricultural products can also be a source of fuel for heating and cooking. The wealthier and medium families in Masrook also sell agricultural produce in markets.

Agriculture has a vital importance in people's lives in Masrook because the agricultural harvest provides the household with food and is the primary source of income. The richer families in Masrook attributed 60% of their income/food security to agricultural products. The poor in Masrook do not sell agricultural produce and "only" consume it. The wealthier families can live much longer from their own produce than the poor, but the importance of agriculture for a household's survival is the same throughout all wealth classes in Masrook. The poor are "simply" poorer and struggling even more with securing their livelihood.

Qwame Bocha villagers rely primarily on labor work for securing their livelihood, however, this does not mean that agriculture is not vital for their food security and livelihood. Water scarcity limits cultivation of land and thus the agricultural output in Qwame Bocha heavily, therefore people have to use alternative ways to provide for their livelihood.

The harsh drought-prone climate of Dai Kundi region is understood to be the main constraint to improved agricultural production for farmers. The continuous drought of the recent years and inefficient irrigation systems aggravate the situation. In Qwame Bocha people state that 15 years ago the agricultural conditions were much better due to better rainfall. The last 5 years have been particularly bad due to a consecutive drought. Unlike Masrook village, Qwame Bocha village has not experienced any increased access to water through, for example, new irrigation systems. Improved irrigation systems (including measures increasing water extraction from springs and measures decreasing water wastage on from the spring to the fields) are therefore perceived as bearing the most potential for both improving agriculture and livelihood security in both villages.

It is only the poorer farmers in Masrook that mention the lack of land as a challenge. This does not necessarily mean that all other farmer have enough land – food insecurity,

discussed above, reveals that people desperately need more food and could possibly improve their food security through a larger patch of land. However, water is so scarce that this is what restricts most people's harvest, rather than the availability of land.

Farmers in both villages mention the lack of improved seeds and high prices of chemical fertilizer as an obstacle to improved agricultural production. In Qwame Bocha the people themselves say that they lack agricultural knowledge, tools, and inputs; and that they see potential for improvement in agricultural production if they could get access to agricultural training and improved tools.

In Masrook there have been a lot of changes in agricultural production in the last 20-30 years. Most men and women in Masrook have attended agricultural training. Farmers in Masrook shifted to cultivating wheat and maize over barley, because in one of the agricultural trainings they learnt that wheat and corn have a higher nutrient content than barley[5]. Also, new and improved seeds, which give a higher yield, have been distributed in the last couple of years. Villagers in Masrook tell that these new and "improved" maize seeds give a higher yield than traditional maize seeds; however, villagers also report a problem regarding the "new" maize needing more water, a problem in drought-stricken Masrook. Interestingly, none of the farmers mentioned soil quality being a problem or a restricting factor, which suggests that the soil of arable land may generally be of good quality. This would be useful to investigate further.

In Qwame Bocha there seems to be a strong belief in almond trees and potatoes as a good income source, and villagers suggest that improved almond tree and potato seeds bear potential for an improved agricultural production. Improved seeds, however, are generally not available or affordable for the people in Qwame Bocha. Nevertheless, some farmers are said to have bought tree seeds from neighboring villages, and claim these seeds bring a better harvest. This interaction with neighboring villages shows farmers' willingness and innovation when it comes to improving their agricultural livelihood, and the potential of using neighboring villages as seed saving and distribution networks. The study of local seed systems and the potential of promoting sustainable supplies of seeds even in the face of droughts and conflict could be an interesting and useful study.

Farmers in both villages say that they lack proper knowledge and skills to fight worms and insects that are attacking plants and flowers. Hitherto they are using ash to try to fight insects and worms. Chemical fertilizer can be bought at the local market, but only few farmers can afford it. Manure, however, is easily accessible to farmers with livestock. Land is ploughed manually, or with the help of oxen if one can afford it.

A comparison of cropping strategies between the villages shows that in Masrook farmers in all wealth classes practice intercropping. They grow beans and maize together, for example, taking advantage of the nitrogen fixation properties of the beans for a better

[5] This is interesting – it would be useful to know who did this training, and to to re-check if this is indeed the case for human nutrition, or if it was based on animal feed requirements.

maize crop. In Qwame Bocha, however, intercropping appears to be an unknown practice.

Food prices and availability fluctuate strongly throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, agricultural products are expensive because they are so scarce. People have used up their food storage, it is not harvesting season, and in addition the villages are often isolated from other markets due to road blockages. Agricultural products are relatively cheaper in summer when the roads are open and food markets and shops can be accessed, and in the fall at harvest time. Some farmers know which crops can be stored longer and try to plant accordingly so they have produce all year round, but they lack proper storing facilities. Particularly the poorer classes are heavily affected by winter food shortages and are forced to borrow money, thus indebting themselves. Improved information on storing crops and assistance to build proper storing facilities could potentially improve farmers' self-sufficiency and decrease their exposure to price volatility.

Men and women are both involved in agricultural work and the tasks are generally gendered in similar ways in the different wealth classes and villages. Villagers say that in average women do around 40% of the agricultural work and men 60%. Women's agricultural work entails mostly harvesting and weeding and men perform all other tasks. Well-off women of the wealth group in Qwame Bocha seem to have more tasks, more responsibility and more decision making power than any other women (in Qwame Bocha and Masrook). The increased decision making power and responsibility of these well-off women could be due to their higher status, or perhaps their involvement in more income-earning activities. In Qwame Bocha, some of these women may be heading households, but the data is not sufficient to be certain. This in an area that would be interesting to investigate further.

Livestock

The role of livestock is viewed very differently between the survey villages, depending on the amount of income it generates for a household. Qwame Bocha defines agriculture as more important than livestock, because agriculture is viewed as generating more income than livestock. In Masrook, however, livestock is viewed as a better income source than agriculture. Some of the women in Masrook told that they highly value the milk and wool that they can generate from livestock, and therefore prefer livestock to agriculture.

Farmers in Masrook specify that successful livestock raising depends on access to a good breed, facilities to keep livestock, great amounts of fodder, pastureland, and a lot of water. The likelihood of droughts, respectively water shortage, in the Dai Kundi region makes keeping livestock a risky business. The data suggests that Qwame Bocha suffers from greater water scarcity than Masrook village, making livestock a very risky investment and livelihood strategy for Qwame Bocha. Considering that the loss of livestock can be greater than the loss of harvest, and considering the regional likelihood of droughts, livestock is in some ways riskier than agriculture. On the other hand, one can sell livestock in difficult times for income, albeit for a lower price. There is also a wide range of animal products

used in the village, including meat, dairy products, wool and manure. Whatever can be spared from household consumption is sold on the market. In any case, agriculture and livestock are closely related, and people tend to do both. Farmers say it is impossible to keep livestock without doing agriculture parallel to it, because a lot of the animal fodder comes from agriculture.

Generally it is women who work with livestock. Women are responsible for the food and health of the livestock, and for processing and selling animal products. It is women who know how to prepare livestock products like dairy products or wool. Youth often help out with preparing manure and taking animals to graze. The livestock sector of the two villages is different in terms of women's rights. In Qwame Bocha, a woman who is head of the household can own and inherit livestock. Owning and inheriting livestock brings the right to sell livestock and decide over the income. In Qwame Bocha, even women who are not head of the household can, with the permission of their husbands, sell livestock.

In Masrook village there are no women headed households, and the men told that women are not able to inherit, own or trade livestock. Women in Masrook, however, stress that that they are included in the decision making process over purchasing and selling of livestock, that they are entitled to use a large part of the income from selling livestock products to cover their expenses for the things they need, to participating in cultural and religious ceremonies. Men cannot attend such ceremonies without women and their dependence on women to be able to participate might explain the women's decision making over this income. It also shows that men may not always admit that women have some decision making power.

Challenges in the livestock sector are numerous. Villagers from Masrook list the absence of a proper market to sell livestock, the prevalence of livestock diseases, and the lack of access to new animal breeds in the village as the most important challenges in keeping livestock. Nevertheless, villagers claim that Masrook has great capacities and possibilities for livestock keeping. They say that Masrook offers good conditions for livestock keeping because there is so much pastureland and because men and women are really interested in livestock keeping. In Masrook, a new breed of sheep was distributed to a few of the poorer households in the last 5 years. This was very welcomed. People in Masrook see potential for improvement of the livestock sector through further introduction of new breeds. In addition, there is a dairy processing center being established, where women will be able to produce yoghurt and cheese for sale.

In Qwame Bocha, there is also interest for new animal breeds, and for sheep breeds in particular. Qwame Bocha farmers rate sheep as the most preferred livestock and view the absence of improved breed as a constraint to improve in livestock. When having to rate different livestock Qwame Bocha would rate sheep first, second cow, third goat and fourth chicken. Sheep are the preferred, because sheep have a high number of offspring, farmers can use milk, wool and meat from it, and last but not least sheep demand fewer

expenses than other livestock. Qwame Bocha famers also mention a lack of skills and knowledge about livestock.

Income

The main sources of income in both villages are agriculture, livestock, and labor work. Labor work mainly means that a family member has migrated and is sending home remittances. Women explain that usually the household consumes all the agricultural products and thus they cannot sell any agricultural products and generate additional income. Only a few manage to produce extra agricultural or livestock produce to be sold on a market. None of the wealth groups can produce and store enough harvest for an entire year and therefore everyone is reliant on additional monetary income to ensure the food security of the household. If income generated through labor work, remittances, agriculture and livestock is not sufficient to cover the household's needs and expenses, the household is forced to borrow money.

The income is used for provision of food, cloth, fuel, education and health, and to repay loans/debts. Food is given the absolute priority. Due to a high level of poverty there is no investment and there are hardly any ways to increase one's income. Villagers say that they are not actually skilled in any labor work, thus they cannot offer it or be paid for it either. Additionally, neither village has a market where, for example, handicrafts could be sold. Women and men believe that more job opportunities within the villages (both for men and women) would improve their situations.

All village members say that it is the men who control the money, but that they consult with the woman of the household over household expenditure. The fact that all wealth classes, both villages and both men and women, say that women and men decide over household expenditures together suggests that women – at least some - have some decision making power and influence on how income is spent. It is men, however, who have the last word on how household money is spent. In the FHH in Qwame Bocha it may be assumed that women have the power of decision making over household expenditures. The data does not contain any specification on how FHH are organized, however, and it would be useful to interview them specifically to learn more about how they make decisions and relate to other households in the village.

The absence of labor work opportunities within the villages for both men and women extends to the rest of Dia Kundi as well. In both villages people are said to migrate to neighboring provinces and countries (such as Iran and Pakistan), and not neighboring villages, which suggests that poverty transcends the survey villages and is a characteristic for the province as a whole.

The villagers who migrated and are sending home remittances, earn approximately six times more than a person in the village. In Qwame Bocha people associate male youth with good income, because male youth can migrate to other provinces and get well-paid labor work in coal mines. For example, a laborer in a coal mine is Samangan province is paid 350 Afghani a day. The average daily income of a farmer is between 80 – 100 Afghani. An additional advantage of labor work like coal mining is that contrary to farming coal

mining provides income all year round. Agricultural work is very seasonal and thus leaves farmers without any income during winter.

Children's labor is an important contribution to the household. Although they do not contribute with money, they help take over easier tasks like collecting fodder and taking animals to graze which allows other households members to concentrate on other tasks.

Men mention an additional need for income. They say they are often forced to migrate in order to take salaried labor work to be able to pay dowry to the bride's family to get married. Men asked for awareness raising by Imams and others in order to decrease the amount of this payment, which they see as a way to improve their income situation. If this were done, however, it would likely weaken the position of a bride, who would have no security in the event the husband decides to divorce.

6) Land Issues

According to the villagers of both villages, there have not been any power conflicts over land, for example, where powerful people would have grabbed or occupied someone else's land. All the land (agricultural and pasture land) is inherited, and no land is sold or bought. There have not been any changes in the last 30 years. There have been occasional disputes when someone's livestock grazes on someone else's pastureland, for example. If such disputes arise, they are then easily resolved by elders, Imams or the CDC.

The villages differ in their description of land rights of women, but are similar in their practice of land rights of women. In Masrook village everyone says that due to traditions women do not own land and cannot inherit land. The men in Masrook say that there are no women currently owning land, but that women do have the right to own land and that women can go and demand their right to land at the local government institution. The women say that women cannot go to a district government to demand their right. In Qwame Bocha men claim women can and are inheriting land. Men say that land is given to women according to Islamic law, which means whatever the size of the agricultural land, women inherit half the size of land compared to males. Furthermore, men say that in case of a dispute over inheritance of land, women can complain to village elders, Imams, local CDC or government administration. However, women contradict this statement and say that women cannot inherit land and explain further that local culture and traditions prevent them from complaining about their inheritance loss to government authorities. Women specify that women can only inherit livestock, household items and accessories, but not land. All villagers agreed that there have not been any conflicts over inheritance of land by women– which could, however, be explained by women not daring to file a complaint. In Qwame Bocha there are numerous FHH, where one might presume that women can indeed inherit land. Nevertheless, the women insisted they couldn't inherit land. Either the situation of these FHH are an exception to the rule expressed in the focus groups, or the land they use is in fact owned

in the name of a male relative. More information on the situation of the FHHs would be very interesting.

In both villages, there is a difference between the description of women's land rights and women's access to land. It is important to note, however, that men are aware of the existence of women's rights to inherit and own land. While men said it is not tradition for women to inherit and own land, they also said that women have the right to complain about this and get access to their land. The fact that men in both villages are referring to women's right to complain (about women's right to land inheritance and ownership) suggests that there is some kind of awareness of women's actual land rights according to Sharia and government law. This awareness, while limited, could be a possible departure point for further discussion and workshops with men and women on women's land rights.

7) Water sources, Management and Issues

Agricultural Water

Both villages source agricultural water via springs located within or near the villages. The water from the springs is usually accumulated in a water reservoir and distributed according to inherited rights and not according to payment or needs of agricultural lands. Both villages make use of a rotation system which regulates when and how long each landowner can access a water source for irrigation water. The duration of time a landowner gets is based on the amount of time the landowner inherited with his or her land. There are numerous challenges concerning water in both villages, however villagers fighting over water access at the springs is however not one of them. Villagers informed that everyone knows and respects the rotation system and does not contest it. This rotation system of water access only concerns water used for irrigating agricultural land, there are no restrictions regarding drinking water. Drinking water is accessible to all villagers at all times.

Despite water availability fluctuating strongly and people's harvest suffering heavily from droughts, the springs generally offer enough drinking water. During times of water scarcity people reduce their area of cultivation and only water using buckets. In order to satisfy drinking water demand, water is heavily rationed and only fruit trees are watered. According to villagers, there are no restrictions regarding drinking water for livestock either. However, statements saying water shortage prevents people from having livestock suggests that during water scarcity drinking water for livestock is affected by water rationing as well. There was no mention of restrictions regarding water used for cooking or bathing.

In times of heavier droughts when even drinking water runs short, survival strategies of people differ depending on their financial means. The poor in Masrook try to compensate water shortages by gaining more water through cleaning up the springs and digging 'karez' (water channels). There was no mention of what the poor in Qwame Bocha do

when they run short of drinking water. The wealthy in both villages on the other hand mention the possibility of transporting and buying water from further away during water shortages. For example, in times of drought the wealthier people in Masrook buy additional water in the neighboring communities or provinces and have it transported to Masrook by road. Around 7% of the Masrook villagers have the financial means to buy irrigation water for their land externally, and this allows them to irrigate their lands during droughts and dry season. In Qwame Bocha, however, despite mentioning the possibility of obtaining irrigation water from outside the village, there was no mention of them actually doing so. There is definitely a need for more water in Qwame Bocha as well, though, since only half of the arable land is cultivated due to water scarcity. The water availability in both villages fluctuates strongly and does not suffice to cover the need for irrigation water for all land, especially during the hot season. The harvest of all wealth groups is heavily affected by water shortage; however, only the well-off have the option of purchasing additional water for irrigation. This means the poor and medium classes are more vulnerable to the effects of drought than the wealthier classes. There was, however, no indication that personal water access at the springs could be bought or augmented through financial means. It is important that the springs do not become privatized in order to protect the less wealthy classes' rights and access to water.

The streams are not cemented and leak water, which is problematic in terms of water for irrigation. Masrook village suffers from water shortage for around 7 months a year and all farmers mention this a problem. Qwame Bocha has suffered from a continuous drought for many consecutive years. In Qwame Bocha only half of the arable land – 100 of 200 *jeribs* - is cultivated. In both villages, the villagers suggest that the streams and water reservoirs could be cemented to decrease water wastage; that the springs are dug deeper in order to increase the amount of water sourced; and that the current old irrigation system be switched to a modern irrigation system to use the current water resources more efficiently. Improved water reservoirs, where the potential surplus water from springs can be stored for summer, could possibly offer an improvement of water shortage during summer.

Another challenge related to the springs and water access is created by the extreme weather conditions. All the springs are exposed to floods, cold temperatures and avalanches during winter which complicates and blocks the access to water. Also, the far location of the springs and water reservoirs complicate the transportation of water, allowing many possibilities for the water to be contaminated and a lot of water to leak. As a solution to this challenge, the villagers suggested digging new springs closer to agricultural land in order to decrease both water wastage and the need for transportation.

Masrook villagers are very specific when it comes to a problem solving strategy to water scarcity. They say the villagers themselves lack the tools, capacity and finances to do this work and therefore suggest that NGOs could assist and help villagers to realize the renovations of springs. The springs in Masrook were originally financed by external shareholders. Their overall quality is described as good, but they still need to be cleaned and renovated and this work is costly and none of the village-based shareholders of

springs have the financial means to cover this. The villagers therefore suggested one of NCAs partners as a possible agency to deal with this. According to Masrook villagers, establishing a proper pipe system and modernizing the irrigation system would allow a more efficient use of the current water resources. According to the poor group, one NCA partner is establishing a pipe system that should be finalized by the end of 2014.

Drinking Water

In both villages people get drinking water from the water reservoirs or directly from springs and the streams. Water is taken from the springs or water reservoirs and carried to the house in jerry cans, in which the water is also stored. The water is not contaminated at the source of the springs; however, it can easily get contaminated between the source of the springs and the water reservoirs, due to people and animals using the streams for drinking, washing or bathing. In Qwame Bocha, people take their bath in the streams and water pools when the weather allows it. Such behavior easily leads to contamination of water. This is not reported to be the case in Masrook.

Masrook villagers expect water quality to improve with NCA partner's introduction of a water scheme. In Masrook village, people have a clearer idea of what safe drinking water is than in Qwame Bocha. Villagers in Masrook define safe drinking water as water without color, odor, taste and foreign particles. In Masrook all wealth groups know about the process of cleaning water through boiling it prior to consumption; however, this does not appear to be a regular practice. They also know and mention the use of chlorine to clean water if needed. The wealthier people (of both villages) import drinking water from neighboring towns or region in case of contamination of the drinking water or water scarcity.

Comparing the answers of the well-off and poor in Masrook village, it seems that the well-off have a better understanding of the water situation and issues in the village. While the poor, for example, mention the pipe scheme project and that it will bring improvement to water access, the well-off give specific information of the purpose of the pipe scheme in raising the hygiene standard in the village by providing safer drinking water. Why this is the case is unclear. Either it could be due to the way the interviews were conducted, or it could reflect the fact that it is the well-off that interact more with the organizations, and are used to communicate with them. It is important to ensure that all villagers have access to information on water and health so everyone is in a better position to understand why someone is sick and how they might be treated.

In Qwame Bocha village it seems there is limited knowledge of how to acquire safe drinking water, or how to improve the water quality through boiling it prior to consumption. Qwame Bocha villagers only mention boiling of water in relation to cleaning the water when there is an acute water disease in town. Boiling water prior to consumption does not appear to be a general practice in Qwame Bocha. Due to lack of knowledge on water safety and water borne diseases, many people in Qwame Bocha leave the jerry cans, in which they store water, uncovered. Also, despite the fact that both villages were affected by water borne disease and both complained about contaminated

water, the practice of boiling water prior to consumption is surprisingly low in both villages.

8) Health, Hygiene and Sanitation

Health

According to the villagers, bad hygiene conditions and routines, unsafe drinking water and food insecurity are causing and contributing to the spread of diseases. Answers to various health and hygiene questions support this correlation and show that there is great potential for improvement in the hygiene sector in both villages. Interviews also reveal that Masrook villagers have benefited significantly from NGO activities in the health sector and as a result the overall hygiene and health status in Masrook has improved considerably and is better than in Qwame Bocha.

The poor in Qwame Bocha mention that they have taken part in a health and hygiene course once; however, none of the other wealth groups in Qwame Bocha mention this course. The answers on health and hygiene given by the poorer group in Qwame Bocha do indicate that the poor group knows relatively more (although very little) about health and hygiene than the wealthier groups. This suggests that the health course mentioned had some impact. Some villagers in Qwame Bocha also mention a vaccination program that took place in the past – the framework of which is unclear though. The villagers of Qwame Bocha say that no major changes or improvements have occurred in the health and hygiene sector in recent years.

In Masrook there have been some considerable health and hygiene practice changes over the last few years. Health education and awareness raising workshops were conducted by NPO, OXFAM, ACF and others in which both men and women participated. In addition, Masrook received a health clinic for women. Within the wealthier class in Masrook the health practices have changed even more in recent years. The well-off explain that nowadays the sick are taken to the pharmacy or a health institution immediately, whereas previously they would be relying solely on traditional treatment. Health awareness has increased and thanks to road improvements, Masrook village is now connected to the health center located outside the village. Modern treatment can be accessed in clinics in Nili (center of Day Kundi) or in Panjab district. Children of the wealthier class also receive vaccinations as health measurements.

The different treatment possibilities and choices reveal the financial limitation of the poor in Masrook. The poor rely mainly on traditional methods. They do not do this because traditional treatment is the most efficient way, but because this is the only treatment they know and can afford. Despite this, the poor nevertheless benefit from the midwifery practice. The poor participated in courses and were able to improve their personal hygiene. The increased health awareness of all wealth classes (including the poor) in Masrook village is reflected in the detailed answers on various health questions, especially when compared to Qwame Bocha.

Both villages are affected by diarrhea, kidney stones, pneumonia, cold, stomach ache and tuberculosis. In Masrook, they named diarrhea, vomiting, poisoning, sore throat and kidney stones as waterborne diseases. In Qwame Bocha, the village population said they suffer from water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid and kidney problems. Qwame Bocha villagers also list typhoid, mental issues and childbirth as relevant health threats. While these have not been confirmed by medical workers, the answers provide a general picture of the situation, what diseases people know about, and what might be done to address them. Typhoid in Qwame Bocha, for example, may be partially explained by the low hygiene standards and knowledge. Qwame Bocha villagers reported a low washing frequency, bathrooms are located in the stalls with animals or in the kitchen, and drinking water is often contaminated. The fact that Qwame Bocha mentions pregnancy and childbirth as health threats and Masrook does not, may be due to Masrook village having a midwifery practice. Mental issues are not mentioned as a general health problem in Masrook village. This does not necessarily mean that mental issues and diseases are not an issue in Masrook village at all. Rather, the fact that Qwame Bocha was more heavily affected by war may account for mental issues being more prevalent there.

In terms of diseases listed, there are no significant differences between the wealth classes in either village. However in terms of preventative measures, knowledge and understanding of health threats and local responses, there are significant differences between different wealth classes and between the villages. In Masrook there is an NGO-financed midwifery clinic and mobile team connected to the clinic that provides additional health services. There is no health clinic in Qwame Bocha. If someone becomes ill in Qwame Bocha, villagers have to rely on traditional treatment or the person has to be taken to the clinic outside the village, which requires financial means and transportation. In Qwame Bocha, the health system (and childbirth services) has not changed or improved in recent years. In both villages, people's possibilities to react to a livelihood-threatening situation (e.g. water scarcity affecting drinking water or irrigation water, or a health incident) depend heavily or entirely on their financial means.

Hygiene

Every household is said to have a bathroom and people follow a regular washing routine – the hygiene standard of the frequency of bathes of people vary, however, between villages and wealth classes. All wealth groups in both villages say that there are no constraints to washing themselves and they can wash themselves whenever they want. Everyone shows certain understanding of importance of personal body hygiene as prevention to diseases. None of the groups mentioned the lack of water or soap as possible constraints to body hygiene. In both village washing routines are stopped or reduced during winter due to cold weather and water. It is so cold that people become sick from washing and consequently do not wash themselves during cold weather.

In Masrook village, the well-off wash the children twice a week, whereas the poor say they wash their children once a week. Possible reasons for different frequency in washing could be a different understanding of hygiene, different infrastructure preventing

frequent washing, or different availability of time. The poor might have to work more and thus do not have the time to wash more often. This could be investigated more closely during hygiene interventions.

In Qwame Bocha none of the wealth classes say that they wash themselves more than once a week. Some discrepancy between the wealth classes in Qwame Bocha suggest that the poor are taking more frequent bathes than the wealthier people, and that the poor have a greater understanding of importance of hygiene. The poor in Qwame Bocha mention a health course, targeting especially women, but neither the rich nor the medium group mention this course.

In Masrook they try to prevent diseases by having bathrooms, following regular washing routine, using toilets, and most importantly by separating humans and animals. In Qwame Bocha the bathrooms are generally located in the stalls or in the kitchen, which is extremely unhygienic. In Masrook they know to separate animal and human living space which is a simple but effective measure to improve a household's hygiene.

Education on health and hygiene and concrete advice on how to bathe during the cold seasons without getting sick are needed in both villages. The cold weather is a constraint to a more frequent washing routine, as it requires extra fuelwood to heat the water and the washing room. In Qwame Bocha hygiene and health might be improved by not taking baths in streams located upstream from water reservoirs to avoid contaminating drinking water. Education and training on water and body hygiene is needed in both villages, particularly in Qwame Bocha and in the poorer households in Masrook.

Latrines

The data on number of latrines and the hygiene quality is inconclusive for both villages – people of different wealth groups give contradicting answers in terms of number and quality of latrines, and they seem to mix the terminology of latrines and bathrooms. Therefore this report does not contain exact numbers of bathrooms and latrines or a definite statement of the present level of hygiene. Nevertheless, a need for latrines can be deduced from the answers. Nowadays, only around 20% of villagers in both villages have access to some kind of latrine – however, they describe these latrines as unhygienic. Despite this, people through all wealth classes voice their interest in using latrines.

In Masrook, there are around six more modern latrines in the village; four of which are built by NPO (Norwegian Project Office) and the two others by the villagers. The data does not give information on "how modern" and thus on "how hygienic" these latrines are. The rest of the latrines are built in a traditional manner which means they do not have a ventilation system, a window, a door or are connected to water. These latrines are described as being in a bad condition, because they are not connected to water and consequently cannot be kept clean. Therefore villagers in Masrook do not associate latrines with any hygiene advantage. The poor wealth group in Masrook for example associates latrines with the advantage of privacy and that the waste is not being scattered

around the house. They do not associate the use of latrines as improved hygiene, rather the opposite. Due to absence of water in the latrines and a proper cleaning system the latrines are often dirty and smelly. Latrines introduced through NPO do not have running water, but are well ventilated and villagers are shown how to use soap and water to wash, and water to flush.

Latrines are privately owned and located next to people's homes. In both villages there is only one publicly accessible latrine, which is located at the Mosque. Other possibilities of public latrines could be at schools. Building proper public latrines at schools and educating children on hygiene could potentially improve hygiene standards of both the children and their families, if they share their knowledge with those at home.

9) Security and Conflict Resolution

The security situation in both villages has improved considerably compared with the situation even 5 years ago. Masrook villagers define crime loosely as any unwanted and unwelcome activity in the village, and name robbery, looting, assault, kidnapping and murder as concrete examples of acts of crime. (In Qwame Bocha villagers did not discuss their understanding of crime and security within the framework of the survey). There have not been any recent assaults or other criminal activities or ongoing conflicts in either village that would end in violence or as a threat to someone's security. Qwame Bocha villagers specify that nowadays there are no conflicts with neighboring villages and relations with neighboring villages are actually peaceful, which was not always the case in the past. The populations of neighboring villages often belong to a different tribe, which could lead to conflicts in the past, but does not anymore. Intertribal marriages are not problematic and exist in the region. This is attributed to the fact that the villages do not share joint resources with the neighboring villages (thus there a no conflicts over the distribution and use of resources) and that there is no culture of intertribal conflict.

Nowadays there are only smaller conflicts, which can be resolved quickly and internally. Typical conflicts in the villages regard land, pastures and irrigation water, but they are so small that they are immediately resolved either by the parties involved in the conflict or at the village level. In theory such conflicts could be taken to the district level, but in practice they are resolved before that is done.

Both villages say they do not have any conflicts worth mentioning. Nevertheless, conflicts that do arise are mainly around natural resources. This shows that natural resources are important; in fact, so important that people engage in conflict over them. Also, the conflicts appear to be case orientated and not wealth class oriented, and often within families. Finally, there is no mention of other conflicts. This does not mean that no conflicts exist but could mean that they are not willing or comfortable voicing these conflicts to outsiders.

This study suggests that the security situation within the villages is indeed good, and that the main insecurities are natural hazards such as drought, snow and landslides. Occasional security threats are possible, though, for example when a warlord gains power in the region, as was the case the year following the survey. The villages will always be subject to political changes in the wider region that may indeed seriously affect their security, influencing relations within the village as well. NCA has good contact with their partner organizations which can help to keep them informed of the more serious political landscape within which the study villages are embedded. They can also play a key role in assisting villages in managing conflicts which may arise.

Conflict and crime resolution is organized on three levels. First, the relatives of the parties involved in the crime or conflict try to resolve the conflict. Only if they do not succeed to resolve the conflict themselves, the issue is taken to the village level, and the CDC, elders and religious leaders try to resolve the conflict. If a conflict does not get resolved at the village level, it gets forwarded to the district level. However, according to the villagers conflicts are "always" resolved at the village level and "never" referred further. One of the elders in Masrook comments that since he acquired conflict resolution skills in a workshop (by an NCA partner), he is now able to resolve conflicts within an hour. This explicit mentioning of conflict resolution skills and the workshop suggests that the conflict resolution workshops resonate with the people's needs and interests, and that workshops in general are a welcome event and institution.

So, usually if anyone in the village were to commit a crime, he/she is then judged, convicted and punished by the CDC, the elders and religious leaders. The same is the case for conflicts and arguments between villagers. The CDC represents the villagers and is formally the one to deal with conflicts. In reality CDC works closely together with the elders and religious leaders. Religious leaders such as Imams and village elders are respected and perceived as authorities and are powerful. There are additional "powerful" people who are also part of conflict resolution and decision making processes that are considered powerful due to their wealth. Both the well-off and the poor expressed that those with money have power. When asked how one could increase woman's power in decision-making process, both women and men from all wealth groups replied that an increase in women's income will increase their decision-making power.

The power structure does not vary a lot between villages, and the different classes understand and define powered decision-making process and conflict resolution similarly. Villagers appreciate the judicial system at the village level because it allows them to save travel costs to externally located judicial systems and it allows them to continue concentrating on their daily work. This is an important perception of villagers that should be considered when engaging in improving the judicial system.

Police

The villagers describe the security as good and attribute this to the police patrols in the villages. The role of the police is not described as becoming involved in conflict resolution or crime solving. The police's role is "only" to arrest criminals and take them to the judicial sector. However, in the long run it is the continuation of the police's presence and

work that creates and maintains the overall and long-term security in the village, the district and the province.

The police patrolling the villages and the security department's proximity is viewed as the main reason why people have not committed any big crimes and refrain from engaging in physical and armed conflict. According to villagers the improved security is due to the police patrols in the village, the proximity of the police department[6], the strengthened security administration at the district level, people's good cooperation with the police and government, and finally people's own engagement in preventing destructive and bad behavior activities before they happen. Both villages talk about civil society playing a vital role in maintaining security through collaborating with the police and reporting any suspicious activity. This awareness and already existing collaboration complements the villages' peace and conflict resolution mechanisms.

In Masrook, relations between villagers and the police are described as good. The villagers specify that one thing they value about police presence in Masrook in particular, is that the police enable NGO work. The police guarantee and maintain a certain security level, which is a necessary condition for NGOs to be active in the village. This shows the high appreciation, but also need, for NGO work in Masrook village. Villagers make an interesting link between the current government, police and NGOs. Villagers see the police as a prolonged arm of the government and because the police enable and allow NGOs to work in Masrook village, the villagers trust the current government. For villagers the presence of NGOs in the village is a proof that the current government is good and is trustworthy.

In Qwame Bocha, the relation between police and people seems more complicated than in Masrook. People cooperate with the police and attribute the current security level to the presence of the police, however they do not seem to trust the police. It would be interesting to revisit this issue now after NCA has implemented some development work there, to see if there is more trust between the village and the government, including the police.

There are no female police officers at the village level, but there are female police officers at the district and the provincial levels. The female police officer's job includes searching female entrants to hospitals and government offices, and dealing with female offenders of the law. The women of Masrook in particular welcome the existence of female police officers; they specify it should be women who arrest or deal with women and not men.

[6] There are no police stationed in the villages.

10) Decision Making Processes and Social Relations

Women's Role, Power, Rights and Situation

Villagers of Masrook and Qwame Bocha state that the situation of women and girls is good. Women are said to be participating with their men in all social activities and economic jobs. As previous analysis has shown, women might be participating in numerous social and economic activities, but they have very limited decision-making power. Furthermore, villagers say that there are no obstacles for girls to attend school, and that girls' situation after having been married is "normal". However, villagers also state that in some marriages violence against girls occurs due to the low age of the girls. Such statements where the overall situation of women are defined as good despite young girls knowingly being physically abused reveal girls' (respectively women's) vulnerability.

The overall picture of women's situation is worrying. Women and girls do not have equal rights as men and boys in either village. Girls are underrepresented in school and drop out of school early in order to get married. Women have extremely limited decision-making power at both the household and village level. Women and men of all wealth classes in both villages stress women's presence and participation in decision-making processes at the household and village level. Men and women both say women are consulted and decisions on household spending are done in collaboration, yet they also say that it is the men who take the final decision. At the village level, where decisions are taken in a collaborative manner by the village CDC, village elders and religious leaders, men heavily outnumber women. In both villages the establishment of CDC included the principle of having female CDC members, meaning the integration of women in the village level decision-making institution and process. Women are said to voice their opinion in CDC meetings, but description of decision-making procedures leaves no doubt that the decision-making power at the village level is held entirely by men.

Even if women's opinions would be respected and counted as a real vote in the decision making process, their votes would always be overruled due to the fact that men are in the vast majority. Even when the CDC, which is gender mixed, takes decisions without the Imams and elders, women's votes would still not carry any weight, because of the 10 CDC members only 4 are women and decisions are taken by majority. In order to gain a majority for their views the women would have to lobby the men for support. This may be the case now, since no single men or women answered that women are disadvantaged, underrepresented or oppressed. Neither did anyone mention any disagreements between men and women, although these are not necessarily issues that are easily discussed in public. Even though women are not equally included in the CDC as men, the fact that there are female CDC members and that they are verbally attributed decision-making power (though men saying women are included) still suggests that women's role is changing. Based on the data, when asked what could be done in order to increase women's power of decision-making, men and women asked for awareness raising workshops or courses on women's rights. This suggests that men are not necessarily opposed to increasing women's power. What may be more of an issue is class differences in women's representation in the CDC. Well-off women serving in the CDC may be

respected, but they may be more easily swayed to support well-off men's interests unless poorer women are also represented. This could also be the case for poor men.

According to men in Masrook, power relations between men and women, and women's share in community relations, have changed over the last 20-30 years. Some concrete examples mentioned: Women have more mobility than they used to and they attend meetings, NGO organized courses and workshops. They say that since these workshops, women have formulated their own opinions and voice them occasionally as well. Girls also attend school nowadays, which they did not before. At the household level women's involvement in the decision-making process has increased as well.

Unfortunately the data on Qwame Bocha do not allow making any concrete statements on the evolution of women's situation over the last 20-30 years. One might, in the absence of NGO work on women's rights and roles in education, health and livelihood (as in Masrook), assume that there has been limited change in women' s roles and gender relations in Qwame Bocha; however, more investigation would be useful to allow for a better analysis of women's roles before and after development interventions.

It is quite difficult to discover what the gender relations in fact are in the two villages through interviews, as there is often a difference between what people say and what they practice. For example, there is discrepancy when it comes to the description of women's access to their rights between men and women. For example, men tend to say that women can access a loan, because in theory (theory here referring to civil law and Sharia law) women do have the right to access a loan. Women, on the other hand, say that women in reality cannot access a loan due to cultural and traditional barriers. The same can be observed for women's right to inherit land – (see section 6). The difference between what people say and what they actually practice needs to be considered when drawing conclusions on people's statements. More research focusing on the discrepancies between men and women's definition and perception of theoretical and practical rights is needed in order to make more conclusive statements on gendered needs and interests.

In Qwame Bocha, the existence of the 15 FHHs implies that there are at least 15 women with decision-making power at the household level. However, it is not clear whether any of these 15 FHH were included in the interviews, as there was no focus on this in the interview material that was translated. It would be interesting to learn more about these women, and compare their rights in the village to the women in female headed households.

Whereas some villagers say there are no obstacles for girls attending school, others say there are. The enrolment numbers are clear and show that less girls than boys are enrolled in school. The villagers mention some concrete situations where girls are prevented from accessing and finishing school. For example, as soon as girls get married they drop out of school. Also, if a school is located outside the village girls cannot attend as it is too dangerous for girls to be walking far distances on their own. Last but not least, economically challenged families cannot afford sending all children to school and boys are likely to be prioritized. According to some villagers in Masrook, only very few girls

were allowed to attend school in the past. It is recent NGO work that has started, increased and enabled girls' enrollment in school.

When asked about the situation of girls who get married at a young age, people say it depends entirely on the goodwill of her husband's family. They specify if the family is good her situation is good. Violence can occur and when it does it is often due to the young age of the girl. This creates an extremely worrying picture of the situation for young, married girls. It also suggests that there is no functioning external network – judicial, governmental, cultural or religious – that protects girls from possible abuse from their husband or family. As mentioned earlier, people in Masrook village have a different opinion about the payment of *mahr*. One side suggests to lower it in order to facilitate men paying it, whereas another other side adheres to *mahr* payment and demands that "husbands-to-be" have to pay it immediately, invoking Sharia law defining the *mahr* as a woman's right. These issues also influence the vulnerability of young married girls, and need to be addressed in connection with interventions.

In both villages, women influence decisions at the household level. Men apparently do not take big decisions or decisions on travels without consulting women. Further, some women say that they have control over the management of the daily household spendings and other small household expenses. Some women can sell and buy necessary household items, but when it comes to selling of land, women need the permission of their husbands.

One man voiced concern regarding women becoming more aware of and engaged in community matters. He feared that their increased engagement in other matters could lead to women being less engaged in their traditional duties. The men's concern should be taken seriously, because if not it could lead them (and more traditional women) to oppose women's full and free participation in society. Awareness raising of the importance of women's full participation and rights in society to improve everyone's quality of life should be a central part of any intervention. The improvement of women's situation and role will no doubt affect men, and an open discussion of these relations is an important part of positive social change. In other areas we have seen that when women take on new political and economic roles, they are still expected to perform their traditional roles, leading to a heavy workload for women. In any society, social change results in and in fact requires a renegotiation of both women and men's traditional roles and tasks, it is important that all are on board in understanding the consequences of this.

According to all villagers, in order for women to have more power in the decision making process, one would have to increase women's awareness about their rights, raise men's awareness about women's rights, raise women's general education level by sending them to school and literacy courses, teach women about Islam, and last but not least by strengthening women's economy. All believe an increase in women's income will increase women's influence in decision-making. Overall, more research focusing on the nuances and details in men and women's descriptions and perception of women's situation and rights is needed.

11) Humanitarian and Developments Interventions

Whereas Masrook village has been targeted by both NCA and other NGOs for many years, Qwame Bocha has only been targeted by the National Solidarity Program (NSP). At the time of this study, NCA had not started working in Qwame Bocha. Both villages were targeted by NSP. This section will first present some examples of NGO activities and impacts in Masrook village, and then summarize Qwame Bocha villagers' experience with NSP development projects.

NGO Interventions and Impact in Masrook Village

The coverage of NGOs' development activities in Masrook has been extensive. All households have been targeted by one or several NGO initiatives. The impacts the NGO work has had on people's lives in Masrook are diverse. Villagers themselves list the following impacts:

- New cultivations methods
- Increased availability of irrigation and drinking water
- Improved infrastructure
- Health and hygiene education
- Improved hygiene standard in the village
- Some families received solar panels
- People discussed and harmonized their understanding and definition of peace and conflict
- Village elders improved their conflict solving strategies and skills
- Increased understanding of marginalized groups' role and rights of villagers
- Improvement of previously marginalized group's rights and lives

Women and the poor wealth groups are marginalized groups in Masrook and were specifically targeted by many NGOs. As a result they were the main focus and beneficiaries of many NGO projects as well. But all wealth classes and genders participated in and benefited from the NGO interventions. This section concentrates on some examples of interventions that villagers talked about, with a special focus on the impact the work had on marginalized groups, the poor and women. See Appendix 1 for a full list of NGO agencies and activities in Masrook.

Peace building activities such as conflict resolution trainings have had an important and tangible impact on people's lives. Since the workshops, villagers share a common definition of peace and conflict, and conflict resolution on village level reportedly proceeds fast and smoothly.

COAR (Coordination of Afghan Relief) also connected the village to additional springs and renovated a water reservoir. This allowed the villagers to cultivate more land and resulted a larger harvest.

The road construction facilitated the transportation of goods because it allowed a shift from donkeys to cars as a means of transportation. The village as a whole benefits from this road but, as discussed earlier, it is only the wealthier that can afford transport. Therefore only the wealthy can use this road for accessing the health clinics located outside the village, and to have water transported via the road in times of water scarcity. The poorer groups, however, say they too benefit from the road, both in terms of food and goods from other markets that are made accessible, and in terms of income earned in constructing the road.

Villagers do not necessarily need to be directly targeted by an initiative to learn or benefit from it. COAR implemented only a few sample gardens in the area. Nowadays many additional villagers cultivate a little garden on their land. Villagers became inspired by the sample gardens and simply imitated these at home. Also, the STARS (Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society) organization distributed a new sheep breed to some households in the village which inspired the neighboring households to buy sheep of the same breed. It is important to consider this domino effect when calculating the impact future NGO projects could have, rather than only considering the direct beneficiaries. These domino effects can be positive or negative (unintended consequences).

GRSP (Ghazni Rural Support Program) distributed solar power material and trained both women and men as solar engineers. This had very different impacts for different household members. First of all, it allowed households to stop using kerosene lights, which were both unhealthy and expensive. Secondly, solar power enabled the children to study at night and thus study more. Furthermore, the solar powered lights facilitated and changed toilet routines at night. Before, children would just relieve themselves directly in front of the house, because it was too dark for them to wander off and find a more suitable place. The solar powered lights resolved this problem. One woman explains how the solar panels completely changed her life. She explains that before they had the solar power material, all members of her family except her, were going to neighboring houses to watch television at night, leaving her alone at home. Thanks to the electricity provided by the solar panels her family was now able to watch television at home and all family members would stay at home and watch television together. Another advantage is that she is now able to have access to potentially valuable and educational information, and discuss what she saw on TV with her friends, a new kind of social exchange.

Prior to NGO-held workshops on health hygiene, villagers were not aware of the importance of washing hands with soap after touching potentially dirty and infected things. Thanks to the workshops, cleaning hands properly is now integrated in their general hygiene measures. Furthermore the workshops taught villagers about water-borne diseases, and how and why to use latrines.

The development activities have had a definite impact on poor people's livelihood. The poorer families report an improvement in both livestock and agricultural sector. More specifically, the poor say that thanks to better livestock keeping methods the livestock diseases have gone down. Moreover, they experienced an increase in harvest due to an increase in irrigation water and introduction to new and improved agricultural methods.

Thanks to improved livestock health, new dairy processing methods, and thanks to an increased harvest, the poor group managed to increase their income.

In addition, the implementation of many NGO projects required work, which created job opportunities for men belonging to the poor group who were otherwise unemployed. Examples include: road construction, building a health net, modernizing the local irrigation system, cementing/concreting the water reservoirs, setting up a water transportation pipe scheme, solar energy, health education, and gardening. The wealthier group was used more as source of information on needs in the village, than as a source of labor.

NCA partners compiles and analysis the findings of the two target villages in Passmazar village, Daikundi 2014. Photo by Jawad Bahonar GRSP

Awareness raising courses and literacy courses have changed women's situation. Now women are allegedly familiar with topics such as human rights, women's rights, issues related to children's upbringing, mutual respect, reading and writing. According to both men and women, this has already translated into women having formulated their opinion and speaking up in meetings related to these issues. Women point out that the work of the NGOs has raised the general awareness of women's rights and men are less reluctant and sensitive towards women's participation at public gatherings. Also, women acquired dairy processing skills and women's income is said to have increased. Female members are in the CDC; women are increasingly aware of their rights; men are increasingly aware of women's rights; and female members are present at the meetings and some even speak up. While these are good results, it is important to continue to work on reducing women's vulnerability and increasing their decision making power both at the household and at the community level where there is still a long way to go for them to have an equal say in village politics.

It would also be interesting to explore further to which wealth group the female CDC members belong and if all wealth groups are represented, and if the poor women, who are especially vulnerable, are represented as well. Masrook villagers highlight that a big impact of the NGO work is that there is less competition and hierarchy between the

wealth classes. The poor can attend and speak at town meetings nowadays, and most importantly their opinion and suggestions are respected and integrated in the decision making process. The same allegedly counts for women's participation at town meetings. One of the respondents, for example, explained:

> "The relation between men and women in the CDC is excellent. When men hold a meeting they also inform women. Opinions are shared freely. If women's suggestions are useful then men accept their suggestion also. There have not been any differences of opinion or disagreements hitherto, as women have not opposed men's opinions a lot"

While women's attendance in the CDC is positive, statements such as this create doubt about how much women's opinion is asked for, respected or taken into account, especially when it is in opposition to men's.

All wealth groups mention projects focusing on girls and women's role in society, and they mention that these different projects have left a lasting impression on the village. For example, people do not prevent their girls from attending school anymore and women are involved in household and society decision-making. This first of all means that girls were prevented from attending school until recently. Secondly, girls not being prevented from attending school is not the same as girls being supported and sent to attend school. And last but not least, women being involved in household and society decision-making only means that women are participating in decision-making *processes* and not that women have real decision making *power*. Women of the poor group, when asked if they have experienced any changes in their decision-making power, say that during the last year the village and its people have learned and adapted to a lot of new methods and ways of doing things. They nuance their statement by noting that changes in culture and tradition – such as women's role and power - take time, but that the recent changes are at least a start. Villagers limit the impact of the workshops and emancipation by remarking that in families with traditional views the power relations have not changed, meaning women's power in decision-making is completely unchanged.

Future interventions

Women through all wealth classes believe that women's own emancipation and awareness of rights is a necessary condition for women's situation to actually improve. Furthermore women stress that it is important for women to feel encouraged and supported by other village members in their fight for more rights, thus the whole village needs to learn about women's rights. Women and men agree that men's awareness regarding women's rights according to both the constitution and Islam has to be increased.

Some male villagers support a change in women's role. They suggest that women should be provided with capacity building workshops in order to enable women's participation in village activities. According to these male villagers, women's participation in village activities would eventually increase women's decision making power as well, because women would have to be consulted whenever a decision regarding women's topic of expertise is to be made.

Further, women believe that their situation and rights will improve with a rise in income. It is interesting to note that women and men through all wealth classes believe in similar strategies to increase women's rights and role in society. This could be due to their participation in workshops on gender in Masrook. It is also important to note that despite some concerns of the potential change of women's role, there is no concretely formulated opposition against a change in women's role in society. However, the survey revealed that women's voices are in fact not heard, and that women do not have access to their rights[7]. The absence of statements opposing women's rights and change of women's role might be explained with holders of such opinions not voicing their opinion, rather than the absence of such opinions.

When asked about how the already existing implementation and livelihood strategies could be further improved, the richer wealth group makes an interesting point. They suggest that villagers need to be better informed on how to use the current development projects, which suggests that there is unused potential in the current implementation due to people not knowing and consequently not using them. The poorer wealth group in Masrook sees potential for improvement in existing livelihood strategies through renovation of springs to increase water availability and creating a town market so people could trade products locally. Women of the rich group stress that the focus on education for adults and children should be increased. When asked about the most promising future development initiatives, the less wealthy groups list: 1) job opportunities for men, 2) safe drinking water, and 3) provision of irrigation water. Well-off and poor suggest the promotion of and teaching in beekeeping, carpet weaving, tailoring, embroidery or other ways of generating income for future development initiatives contributing to an improved livelihood in Masrook village.[8]

NGOs have been present and part of shaping Masrook village to a point where NGOs have become an integral part of villagers' problem solving strategy. Poor, medium and rich groups rely on them and expect them to assist them. NGOs are performing roles which ideally might be filled by the national, regional or village government, but which are currently unable to offer such services. Due to their contribution, NGOs work resonates with people and they trust them, but at the same time it also highlights how much people rely on their input.

Development Interventions and Impact in Qwame Bocha

Qwame Bocha village has benefited from some development interventions that were implemented in the framework of the National Solidarity Program (NSP). NSP created a Community Development Council (CDC) and constructed a road connecting Qwame Bocha to neighboring villages. Except for these two NSP projects there have not been any other development projects, and villagers say not much has changed in recent years and that there are no new sources of livelihood. This section will summarize people's

[7] The rights referred to here were defined by villagers themselves and not Human Rights. Villagers said that according to Islamic law and according to governmental law women have the right to inherit land.

[8] Unfortunately there is no data on possible future development initiatives wishes of the medium group.

experience with NSP projects, their general attitude and expectation towards development projects.

Qwam Bocha is in a remote location with poor accessibility that has limited the existence of development projects in the village. Qwame Bocha villagers are interested in development projects and are not concerned with how development work might affect their religion, culture or traditions. There does not seem to be any negative prejudice against development initiatives.

According to the rich and medium group, NSP has increased women's power in decision-making at village and household levels. People are probably referring here to the NSP-introduced gender-mixed CDC which included women in village activities and in the decision making process. As discussed earlier, women's actual power of decision making is limited; however, according to both men and women villagers, women have more power in the decision making process than before the NSP process.

The improved road connected Qwame Bocha with other villages and thus allowed an increase in social and economic relations. The improved transportation possibilities sped-up and facilitated the transportation of primary goods to the village, which facilitates the life of shopkeepers in particular. In addition, this road connects Qwame Bocha to a health center. The well-off mentioned that nowadays, when a woman is in labor, she can quickly be transported to the health center. The poor group, however, did not mention any specific advantages of the road, and thus may not be able to take advantage of better access to the health center, since they indicated elsewhere they do not have money for transportation.

According to the poorest wealth group there was a health course and vaccination program that was conducted in Qwame Bocha. The poor group shows to have a higher understanding of health and hygiene than the medium and rich group, which indicated that they probably were the only participants in this health intervention.

The different wealth classes have similar ideas and wishes for future development initiatives, but they deviate a bit in the priority they attribute to different sectors. They would all like to see development projects focusing on the following topics: improving the irrigation system, introducing improved seeds, introducing new livestock breeds, creating schools and health facilities, vocational training and literacy training, job opportunities in general, introduction of bee-keeping, and creation of job opportunities for women. They all ask for improved irrigation schemes, which confirms that all wealth groups suffer from water scarcity. The poor group however sets job opportunity at the top of the list of needed initiatives, whereas the rich and the medium group put irrigation at the top of the list[9]. All wealth groups put job opportunities for women at the bottom of

[9] This could be explained with the wealthier groups owning a lot more land than the poor and due to water scarcity not being able to irrigate all their land. 100 of 200 *jeribs* of arable land are not cultivated due to water shortage. If the majority of the not cultivated arable land belongs to the wealthier groups they would benefit the most from increase in irrigation water.

the list, which could either mean they get lower priority, or that they are unaware of the possibilities such a strategy could bring. When asked specifically what could be done in order to increase women's rights and roles in Qwame Bocha, people suggested education for women, integrating women into the job market, and proper awareness raising of women's rights in the village.

NCA and partner staff are conducting focus study in Masrook village, Daikundi 2014.
Photo by Jawad Bahonar GRSP

12) Conclusions and Recommendations

Although it is difficult to make substantial recommendations based on this particular fieldwork, we can nevertheless make note of some of the more interesting findings and suggest ways that NCA might improve their work in these two villages, and perhaps in other areas as well.

1) There is a lack of sufficient and affordable educational facilities in both villages. While girls are enrolled in school (i.e. 40% of enrolled students in Qwame Bocha are girls), this does not necessarily mean they actually attend school. Also, schooling is only an option for those who can afford it. On the other hand, there seems to be a lot of support among all the wealth groups in both villages of both women and men for the education of girls, so if the economic and infrastructural constraints are met there is a good chance this can be a priority.

Recommendation: NCA and partners could discuss with the district and provincial education authorities their priorities in terms of schools to be supported and teachers to be trained and allocated to the areas where NCA is working, to encourage synergies with government and NGO activities in education. A particular focus on girls' attendance would be useful.

2) None of the villagers produce enough food for themselves for the entire year. There are large differences in terms of the degree to which this limit of self-sufficiency

affects the household's food security. In Masrook the wealthier groups live off their produce for around six months, and the poor for around three months. In Qwame Bocha even the wealthiest group's harvest only last for a maximum of three months, which is how long the poor wealth groups' harvest of Masrook lasts. The poor groups' harvest in Qwame Bocha lasts for as little as one or two months. Poor households in fact often have to buy food from the well-off on credit, which they cannot necessarily pay back, and thus become further indebted. To improve food security, a combination of irrigation assistance for increased production and the development of alternative income sources (which could be animal or agricultural based) would be relevant in both villages. However, it is extremely important that NCA and its partners understand which strategies would benefit which farmers, to ensure a good fit of interventions, which also addresses the debt issues of the poor.

Recommendation: NCA and its partners could be much clearer on which interventions can benefit which farmers in which ways,. This can be determined in a 'mapping' exercise in each village identifying the needs and constraints of each group of farmers, as was done in the focused study. This would lead to interventions that are much better catered to the different needs in the village, and reduce the risk of increasing inequality in the village.

3) Water scarcity due to climatic conditions, and leaking channels limit agricultural production and lead to loss of harvest. Water is a critical resource for the district, and the water management interventions in Masrook have contributed to increased food production and security for all of the groups. In Qwame Bocha, water is even scarcer, and although the villagers are more dependent on income from outside the village, improvements in water management for agricultural production could contribute to food and livelihood security in the event employment opportunities outside the village decrease or are difficult due to conflict. It could also provide women, who do not leave the village for employment, a means of food and income if investment in agriculture is undertaken.

Recommendation: NCA and its partners assist particularly Qwame Bocha in addressing their water scarcity needs through well-planned and designed interventions which ensure that even farmers with limited land are able to benefit. This means attention to both the provision and management of water. An analysis together with the villagers of the current turn-taking system of watering in light of soil types and needs, and size of land, would be useful, to avoid overwatering and water wastage.

4) Health and hygiene interventions have at least some effect, and should be intensified. It was clear that health and hygiene were better in Masrook than in Qwame Bocha, likely due to the NGO-run course and health clinics established in Masrook. While we may not be able to document specific improvements in Masrook, the data shows that awareness of health and hygiene issues, particularly associated with water quality and safety, was much higher in Masrook.

Recommendation: NCA and its partners would do well to implement a health and hygiene program in Qwame Bocha, and consider the possibility of establishing health

clinics there as well. Also, it is important to continue to monitor and train women and men in Masrook to ensure that their new knowledge is put into practice.

5) Livelihood strategies vary significantly between the two villages, and between households. Some will prefer agricultural interventions, others animal husbandry or other income earning activities. In Qwame Bocha, for example, labor income is important. It is therefore important to communicate well with different villagers to understand what strategies they are interested in and can follow, and why. Livelihood options for women have been introduced in Masrook, for example animal husbandry and milk processing. So far, only the better-off women have benefitted from the milk processing, since the poor don't necessarily have animals. This uneven effect was discovered during the research, and has been addressed by NCA's partners by including poorer women in the animal husbandry project.

Recommendation: NCA and its partners should assess how their different livelihood projects target and impact different people in the village, to be sure that they are assisting everyone in the most effective way, and not only those with resources from before. This can be done through discussion with a more diverse group of villagers, as was done in this study, and examining livelihoods in a more integrated manner.

6) Conflict resolution improved in Masrook due to training by NCAs partner. The security situation in both villages had improved over the previous 5 years (prior to the study) and relations with neighboring villages were peaceful. Intra-village conflicts were almost always solved by the local shura, and in Masrook they explained that after conflict resolution training, conflicts were resolved both more quickly and fairly – usually within an hour (!). In Masrook, relations with the government and the police were positive; however in Qwame Bocha these were somewhat tense. This was explained by the fact that Masrook was benefitting from development activities, but not Qwame Bocha (at that time). It will be interesting to see whether these relations improve after the onset of interventions in Qwame Bocha. There was interest by the women in increasing the number of female police to deal with crimes towards and by women.

Recommendation: NCA and its partners should implement the conflict resolution training in Qwame Bocha as well, as this seems to have been very well appreciated by villagers in Masrook. This could as well include consultations with the police in an attempt to build trust between the police and the communities.

7) Women's role in decision making at village level is still very limited. While women have been included in the CDCs, their power to make decisions remains limited for two main reasons. First, they are in the minority; and second, their voice is only considered when it is in support of issues presented by men. This makes it very difficult for them to voice their opinion in cases where they might disagree with the male members of the CDC. In Masrook, they explained that there is much greater awareness of women's participation than in Qwame Bocha – a result of a workshop in women's issues for men and women in Masrook. Men and women in both villages and from all wealth groups stated that the way to increase women's influence was for them to contribute

income to the household. Young girls and women are particularly vulnerable to early marriage and a source of income to parents in debt, something which could be discussed in awareness raising workshops, which were specifically asked for in both villages. Masrook villagers in particular mentioned that these workshops were valuable.

Recommendation: NCA and its partners should expand their focus on income-earning activities for women, as a step not only towards livelihood security, but as one path towards their empowerment. They should also continue to have workshops for men and women to raise awareness of the importance of women's participation in all aspects of community life, as well as ways to better protect the interests of young women in the community. Also, a better understanding of the specific challenges of FHHs in Qwame Bocha would be useful for future activities.

8) Interventions need to be better targeted and integrated to be both effective and sustainable. There is no doubt that NCA partners' interventions were greatly appreciated in Masrook. This was evidenced by the large participation of the villagers in this study. As one participant said: 'I have my wheat standing in the fields waiting to be harvested before it rains, but I decided to participate because this is an investment in my future, so I have to take the time.' At the same time, it was clear that the interventions were somewhat piecemeal, being introduced by different organizations without any common strategy for the village. Also, there was much too little awareness of the impact of the interventions, in terms of who had been consulted and who had been included in the process. Many of the villagers were unaware of the different activities, as they were not in the target group. The study uncovered the need for NCA and its partners to have a much more participatory process, where a wider range of villagers are included in the discussions and where different interests and capabilities are identified. This will make it easier both to design interventions that are relevant to more villagers, and to promote processes that contribute to cooperation, tolerance, equity and empathy in village planning. The danger of unequitable development in creating conflict in the villages cannot be underestimated – there is already ample evidence in Dai Kundi and elsewhere in Afghanistan of conflicts arising between villages when someone has been left out of the development process.

Recommendation: It is highly recommended that NCA and its partners adjust their assessments, monitoring and evaluation procedures to make them more integrated and inclusive. This would best be done if NCA partners, rather than acting alone in each of the villages, worked together to better understand the challenges and opportunities of their communities. This could be possible with NCAs help to coordinate common activities such as assessments, monitoring and evaluations and the use of a common methodology. This study provided NCA staff with some input into how this might be done in practice. It is also highly recommended that there is annual field training and an analysis exercise for NCA staff and partners to teach, develop and practice how they approach the villages and learn about the challenges and opportunities. By institutionalizing such a field training and analysis exercise, the quality and relevance of the work of NCA and its partners would be greatly improved, and it would be easier to document the results with the multitude of examples that arise under such exercises.

Appendix 1: Lists of activities of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) partners

- **The COAR** (Coordination of Afghan Relief) has built water reservoirs for irrigation of lands, distributed fruit tree saplings and introduced the village to new methods of wheat and vegetables cultivation.
- **The GWO** (Green Way Organization) has distributed dairy processing material, given training on dairy processing, created self-help groups, given literacy courses and constructed a dairy processing center.
- **The NPO** (Norwegian Project Office) built 4 sample toilets, engaged in raising health awareness and helped in providing safe water through establishing a pipe scheme.
- **GRSP** (Ghazni Rural Support Programme) distributed solar power material (panel, battery, etc.) for all households, trained 2 people as solar technicians and offered literacy courses for elderly women.
- **STARS** (Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society) distributed sheep, opened up an animal clinic, offered vaccinations and treatments for the animals and engaged in raising awareness about animal health and care taking.
- **CCA** (Cooperation Center for Afghanistan) held workshops on peace building and conflict resolution, created a peace committee at the village level, strengthened the village CDC, conducted women empowerment workshops, did civil society capacity building, created a youth empowerment network, registration and resolving conflicts through community elders

Other NGOs activities

- **ACF** (Action Contre la Faim): has distributed both cash and seeds and chemical fertilizer. They have been cleaning the agricultural water reservoirs and strengthened the water reservoirs with cement and stone. Furthermore, they gave cooking classes for women.
- **OXFAM** has been engaged in cleaning up the springs and digging springs. They have also created Community Development Councils (CDCs) and constructed roads. (The springs, which were cleaned up through OXFAM support, have been destroyed/damaged)
- **RCDC** has built the road which connects this area with the district center.
- **Move Welfare Organization** set up a midwifery clinic.